

BEHIND THE CURTAIN OF THE BEAUTY PAGEANT: AN INVESTIGATION OF
U.S. NEWS UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAM RANKINGS

by

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DEDICATION

I once heard that the education level of children is greatly influenced by the education level of the mother. It is because of this finding that I dedicate this work to my daughters Perry and Cody Hutchison. They were both old enough to be in the audience for my defense and wise enough to ask “why was I doing all this work in the first place?” It is my hope that they will one day earn their PhDs and embrace the thrill of learning while achieving significant lifetime goals.

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ABSTRACT

The undergraduate business program rankings in USNWR are based solely on peer assessments from deans and associate deans of AACSB accredited U.S. business schools. Often these reputation-based rankings are discounted and likened to a beauty pageant because the process lacks transparent input data.

In this study, ten deans and ten associate deans representing top 50 USNWR undergraduate business programs were interviewed. The administrators represent schools with diverse regional locations. Seven of the institutions are public and three are private and all but two universities are AAU member institutions.

The research answers the following questions: how do deans and associate deans define quality in their school's undergraduate program and in other schools' programs? How are administrators influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools? Are competitors treated differently when evaluating academic reputation? What methods are administrators utilizing to influence brand perception with their stakeholder and educational peers?

Business school deans and associate deans emphasized different aspects of an undergraduate program in their description of quality. The deans most valued quality from faculty and research. The associate deans valued the

undergraduate experience including sense of community, engagement, involvement, leadership, student services, as creating distinction in a program. The two different perspectives impacted how administrators casted their votes on the USNWR ballot.

Business school administrators are barraged by influences that affect their perceptions about program reputations. Overall the influences on perception included quality of faculty, research, student standardized test scores, resources, characteristics of an institution, professional involvement and social networks including networks with faculty, students, other professionals and employers that provide feedback about schools. Professional involvement (AACSB, conferences, competitions, etc.) and social networks (PhD students, other deans, siblings, friends, students, employers, etc.) provided administrators with important insight into academic reputation. The quality of people that the administrators knew from other schools made a difference in peer schools' reputation.

Finally, most schools employ integrated marketing communication (IMC) including taglines, direct marketing, event marketing, feature promotions, customer service and brand messages to influence stakeholders and peers. This study confirmed that everyone in a business school is a brand manager because brand is influenced through numbers of interactions over time with a variety of

stakeholders. True to the IMC framework, business schools have moved away from transactional service with students and other stakeholders to a relationship driven educational model emphasizing community, service, personal attention, and long-term involvement with the school.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Why Pageant People Compete in Beauty Pageants: scholarship money, celebrity status, learning good sportsmanship, networking, fun and friendship.

As you can see, there are many reasons pageant people compete in beauty pageants, and there are many reasons why, year after year, audiences tune in by the millions to watch as the winners are crowned, and to witness the makings of those who will become future stars.”
(Cherie Wimberly, 2010, former pageant titleholder).

The Nature and Purpose of the Study

The US News and World Report’s (*USNWR*) annual rankings of “Best Undergraduate Business Programs” are something of a mystery in the academic community. Unlike most other academic rankings, this ranking uses only peer perceptions of quality to create the list of top schools and departments. Rankings are important to education stakeholders and better understanding this mysterious “black box” is the purpose of this study. Ideally, prospective students and their parents could visit web sites and research schools to obtain outcome data on learning, graduation rates, or satisfaction. However, this level of detail is often hard to find and young people may not be interested.

For undergraduate business programs, two rankings are designed to help understand quality, *Business Week* and the oldest ranking source, *USNWR*’s annual undergraduate business school ranking. The *USNWR* ranking is based on a survey of deans and senior faculty (often associate deans or leaders of the undergraduate

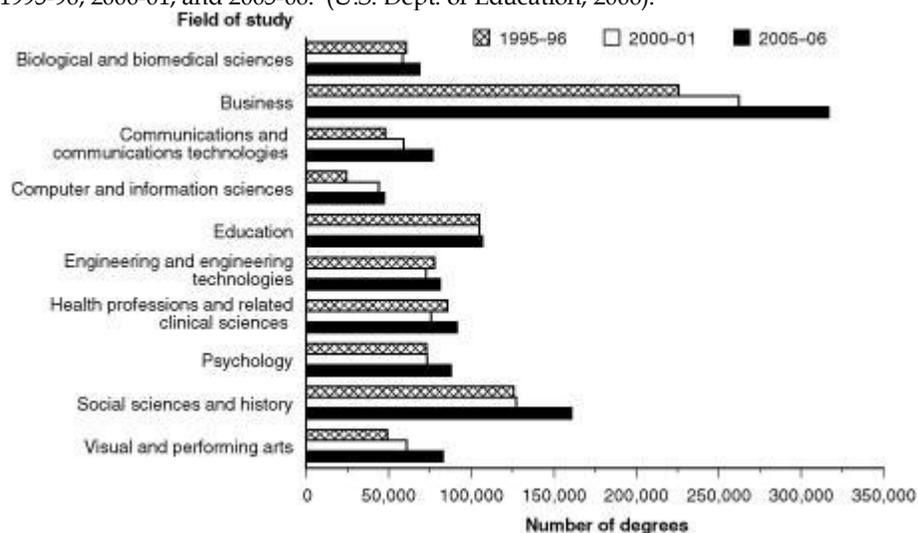
program) in each business program accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The ranking is solely based on the respondent's perception with 42% of the respondents participating (2010 ranking). In business specialty areas (i.e. majors/departments) the schools are ranked by the frequency of being mentioned.

As of January 2010, 579 member schools of AACSB are recognized with business accreditation. Thirty-five countries are represented in this total with 110 member schools representing countries outside the United States. Undergraduate business programs account for the majority of accredited programs with 46 institutions having only undergraduate programs (7% of accredited members) and 482 institutions with both undergraduate and graduate programs (85% of accredited members) from AACSB.

Business continues the national trend of being the most popular major in the United States. Of the 1,524,000 bachelor's degrees conferred in 2006-2007, 328,000 (21%) were in the field of business (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009), Figure 1. Consequently, there are a lot of students seeking and completing business degrees and a lot of institutions ready to enroll them. Many students and parents turn to rankings to help them sort through the variety of business schools available in the market. In most cases, a traditional college on-line search yields similar promises and

images across a variety of schools including attractive students and engaging faculty interacting with them. Rarely can a student find specifics about what he/she will learn in each program. Derek Bok (1986), former president of Harvard, believes that understanding quality from a particular academic program can be difficult to ascertain, because institutions do not usually define success in a legitimate way. He also believes that academic standards have not been established and normed for students.

Figure 1 **Trends in bachelor's degrees conferred** by degree-granting institutions in selected fields of study: 1995-96, 2000-01, and 2005-06. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2006).



In 2009, during a national college survey, more than half of all entering freshman reported that the school's good academic reputation was a "very important" consideration in their college selection (Pryor, J.H., Hurtado, S., Saenz, B. B., Korn, J.S., Santos, J.L., & Korn, W.W., 2010). Contrary to the popular

belief of parents and students, the *USNWR* undergraduate business ranking system does not measure specifics regarding learning or effective educational practices. This is why the ranking is often dismissed by academics as a “beauty or popularity contest”. The purpose of this research is to step behind the curtains of this “pageant” to learn the inner secrets of the perception of the judges regarding academic quality, how judges actually complete their “score card” and how participants (in this case also judges) try to influence the process. The beauty pageant metaphor is the most common for the *USNWR* rankings and is the metaphorical guide used through the paper. Using this metaphor, the deans and the associate deans that participate in completing the ranking ballot become the judges. The magazine publisher, *USNWR* becomes the “event organizer” and profits from the “beauty pageant”. The AACSB schools listed on the ranking ballot become the contestants, all vying for the grand crown of “top 5, top10, top 20, top 50, etc.” and an overall pageant winner in the number one position.

Understanding what is measured in rankings is important to education stakeholders. According to the *USNWR* publisher, the magazine provides academic rankings, albeit controversial, to help students and parents make one of the most important decisions in their lives. We also know the purpose is to sell their most popular annual College and University ranking issue. The

rankings are justified because the cost of higher education is escalating and most people choose only one college in their lifetime, having resources to compare programs is valuable. The editors of *USNWR* describe their rankings:

We rank for quality and we rank for best value as well. You wouldn't go out and buy a computer or a car without making sure it was the best you could afford given your budget. The same rule should apply for choosing a college-especially at a time when four year at some private U.S. universities can cost you more than \$200,000 in tuition, room, board, required fees, books, and other personal expenses (*USNWR*, August 21, 2008).

Most families would believe that the *USNWR* editors have their best interest in mind, however, many would be surprised at how the undergraduate business programs are really measured. This study will help us better understand the perceptions of quality that peers use when evaluating others in their field. This chapter defines the problem, outlines the purpose, justifies the significance, introduces the theoretical frameworks and discusses the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Rankings are prolific and can often be confusing because for profit magazines rank universities, specific academic programs within the university (i.e. engineering, business, etc), and the quality of specific departments within academic programs. With high tuition and media interest, Masters of Business Administration Programs (MBA) are most impacted by the prolific popular magazine rankings. While enrollment in business undergraduate education is

steadily increasing, only two ranking systems are recognized by the business school community for undergraduate education, *USNWR* is the oldest and *Business Week* is relatively new but gaining attention. The two ranking rubrics are significantly different as the *USNWR* is a peer based ranking and the *Business Week* ranking is more data driven with a specific set of inputs.

A peer based ranking is very simple. Every April, *USNWR* sends out a 14 page ballot in which every AACSB accredited school in the United States is listed in alphabetical order under the state in which they are located. The deans and associate deans are asked to review the list and consider each program's scholarship, curriculum, and quality of faculty and students. The judges are to use the scale of distinguished (5), strong (4), good (3), adequate (2), marginal (1) and "don't know". If the respondent is not familiar with the schools, the directions ask them to mark "don't know". This is solely based on the perceptions of quality by the evaluators. Less than half of the administrators that are asked to participate cast their votes, with 30-45 percent of deans and associate deans casting ballots (44% 2008, 38% 2009, 42% 2010).

This study will focus on better understanding the undergraduate business program rankings of *USNWR* through the perspectives of the deans and associate deans interviewed.

The Problem with the USNWR Ranking Methodology

Undergraduate business education stakeholders are often influenced by outside evaluation of business schools in for-profit publications including *USNWR* and *Business Week*. Students are inundated with ranking information about universities and in some cases, specific academic program rankings. According to the national CIRP freshman survey the rankings seem to be gaining popularity as a method to influence college choice. In 1995, 16% and in 2009, 18.5% of the college freshman answering the survey indicated that college rankings were very important in their college decision (Pryor et. al, 2010). Overall, a school's academic reputation was the most important decision factor for students when selecting their college. This information suggests that college rankings are a kind of confirmation of perceived academic quality and might be used to confirm a student's perception of academic quality, helping reinforce a student's choice (Pryor, et. al, 2010). Similar to the metrics of a business in which success is associated with a bottom line profit-loss formula, many seek a similar simple formula to help them assess quality and effectiveness of business education. Often, ranking magazine's numerical rankings are the closest assessment of quality that stakeholders can find.

Importance of USNWR Ranking

Improving in the rankings is a strategic desire of many stakeholders in business schools. It is common to see goals in business school strategic plans that read “to move up in the rankings.” To meet these goals, many business school budgets have line items for external marketing and promotion. Rankings are also often prominently displayed in recruiting documents, on business school web sites, and presented during college faculty, alumni, and advisory board meetings. At Emory University for example, a brochure was developed to help guide students in understanding college rankings: *Rank the Rankings: Your Guide to College Reviews*. A rise in rankings can generate college-wide excitement, with banners and celebrations for the students and faculty as evidenced in a coincidental visit to Emory’s Goizueta’s Business School as the administration and students were celebrating moving up in the rankings. Conversely, a fall in the rankings can generate questions about quality, leadership and investment in the program. In a recent study, there was a correlation between a public school being listed on the *USNWR* ranking and the amount of state funding. Specifically, state appropriations per student increased 3.4 to 6.8% with the explanation that the *USNWR* rankings increased both the public and the politicians’ awareness of quality steering them to the increased university funding (Jin & Whalley, 2007). Most studies are related to the effect on an

institution when *USNWR* rankings change. Ehrenberg and Monks (1999, 2005) found that lesser *USNWR* rankings meant schools accepted more applicants, had a lower yield of applicants, and over all lower standardized test scores. In an era of state financial cutbacks, growing business faculty salaries, competition for the best students and strong influence from national boards, better understanding academic reputation and branding is critical for business schools as they race for national prominence.

Deans' Attitudes about Rankings

Are these rankings problematic? For many, the answer is yes, especially in very competitive professional schools, including MBA programs. One of the problems is that few stakeholders understand the methodology and what is being evaluated by national ranking instruments. For many MBA students the rankings are important in selecting a program because there are a large number of schools to choose from and the rankings help provide an initial way to narrow down schools. For many students, the ranking of a school signals excellence in the minds of academics and employers. Higher ranking MBA programs are believed to provide greater professional opportunities equating to a higher return on their tuition investment. For faculty and administrators, the rankings are so important they have fundamentally influenced the strategy of the delivery of MBA programs (Policano, 2005). As a result of a crowded market for MBA

programs and a very small pool of top domestic students, competition is intense and top rankings matter to students. To improve rankings, MBA directors have implemented changes in their programs in areas that will result in higher rankings. Some of the program changes have included increasing GMAT score requirements, allowing smaller cohorts with only the most talented students, overemphasis on salaries, and an increase in investments in MBA programs. Growing the size and offerings of MBA programs, because professional school tuition is market priced, provides important financial resources in business schools. Higher rankings often lead to more students and results in program growth with more revenue to the school. Consequently, deans often place strategic emphasis on MBA programs over undergraduate programs. There is also belief that MBA programs are the flagships of the business school and that MBA rankings are critical in achieving national prominence (Policano, 2005). Some criticisms stem from the difficulty of numerically ranking quality, resulting in misleading data and outcomes (Hoover, 2007). The previous dean of the Eli Broad College of Business at Michigan State University, Robert Duncan wrote,

One of the most perverse tasks a business school dean has to deal with is the lunacy of the rankings of the various publications. No other dean in the university has to deal with the sheer number of these every year. Best advice here is to do the right things in terms of the academic mission of the school and hopefully the rankings will take care of themselves (AACSB, 2008, p 1).

Ranking Confusion

For education stakeholders, the reference to rankings can be confusing. The confusion stems from the variety of methodologies and sources used to determine rankings. Three common ranking rubrics exist: institutional excellence as evaluated by peers based on reputation and resources; student and alumni outcomes; and effective educational practices or processes used to evaluate a variety of programs and colleges (Pascarella, 2001). Magazine rankings evaluate both entire universities and specific colleges including engineering and business, not always using the same methodology. For example, the *USNWR* uses a data driven method to evaluate universities and MBA programs with 25% of the score allocated from a peer assessment. However, in the undergraduate business program ranking 100% comes from peer assessment. The editors explain the legitimacy of this method because they are consulting top academic administrators who are best positioned to understand the competition and the quality of their peers. “The peer assessment survey allows the top academics we consult to account for intangibles such as faculty dedication to teaching,” (USNWR, 2009).

For undergraduate business programs, the oldest ranking source is *USNWR*. The ranking is based on an annual survey of deans and senior faculty or associate deans (two votes per school) from undergraduate business programs

accredited by the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business. The respondents are asked to evaluate all schools they are familiar with on a scale from 1 (marginal) to 5 (distinguished). Table 1 below demonstrates the tenuous nature of a school's ranking. In the 2008 and 2009 scores and rankings of schools, notice how a tenth of a point difference in score can alter a school's rank. The editor of *USNWR* defends the practice of ranking based on peer assessment as effective because the opinions of professionals in the same industry matter. He goes on to explain that consumers are hungry for information about schools, universities, colleges and programs and acknowledges that most of the peer assessment ranking scores are relatively stable over time. According to *USNWR* data the schools with the highest peer scores tended to have the highest graduation rates and retention rates with strong admissions data and high quality faculty. The reverse was true for schools nearing the bottom of the peer ranking. According to the *USNWR* editor, Bob Morse, in his Jan. 21, 2010 blog he believes the correlation between rank and school quality proves the validity of peer assessment. (Morse, posted Jan. 2010). Editor Morse has a blog filled with articles that support his *USNWR* ranking rubric and he receives feedback from many others that do not. No matter how the peer based rankings are justified the methodology is considered flawed and

the rankings are controversial, because tenths of points don't seem significant enough to earn a particular ranking number.

Table 1: Year-to year Variability of School rankings Based on Score, (USNWR)

School Name	2008 *		2009 *	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
University of Pennsylvania (Wharton)	1	4.9000	1	4.8156
Massachusetts Institute of Tech. (Sloan)	2	4.7000	2	4.6192
University of California Berkeley (Haas)	3	4.5000	3	4.4475
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	3	4.5000	3	4.4366
New York University (Stern)	5	4.3000	5	4.3038
U. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (Kenan-Flagler)	5	4.3000	6	4.1704
Carnegie Mellon University (PA)	7	4.2000	6	4.1725
University of Texas-Austin (McCombs)	7	4.2000	6	4.1836
University of Southern California (Marshall)	9	4.1000	10	4.0672
University of Virginia (McIntire)	9	4.1000	6	4.1776
Indiana University-Bloomington (Kelley)	11	4.0000	11	3.9542
Cornell University (NY)	12	3.9000	11	4.0286
Emory University (Goizueta)	12	3.9000	13	3.9368
Ohio State University-Columbus (Fisher)	12	3.9000	17	3.8008
U of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign	12	3.9000	13	3.9192
Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison	12	3.9000	13	3.9044
Washington University in St. Louis (Olin)	12	3.9000	13	3.8546
Pennsylvania State U. University Park (Smeal)	18	3.8000	21	3.7421
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (Carlson)	18	3.8000	21	3.7325
University of Notre Dame (IN)	18	3.8000	17	3.7519

Criticism of Rankings

The literature is full of arguments for and against academic rankings by for profit magazines. The Education Conservancy, a nonprofit group and ringleader of a revolt by some colleges against *USNWR* (2007) outlined the following five

basic flaws associated with rankings. First, the rank implies a false precision in the data used, as the rank itself is derived from tenths of points difference, this is considered an insignificant variation to yield stacked numerical rankings.

Second, the rankings fail to delineate differences in educational mission because schools are measured on a single scale. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education developed a classification system to support research and policy analysis. Over the decades the Carnegie Classifications have been widely used in describing the diverse missions of schools. The differences in schools are represented by what is taught (undergraduate and graduate instruction), characteristics of students (enrollment profile) and the size and setting of the school (<http://classifications.carneigefoundation.org/descriptions/>, 2010). The rankings do not reflect this well recognized diversity within Higher Education. A third criticism comes from the ranking body's inability to assess or measure learning. Finally, the over emphasis on rankings by academic stakeholders is believed to encourage gaming and wasteful spending of resources on building reputation, while degrading the achievements of students and underemphasizing access by all to higher education (http://www.educationconservancy.org/presidents_letter.html, 2007).

Another prolific critic of academic rankings includes Alexander Astin (1999), in his critiques he writes that overemphasis on rankings and prestige becomes a

failure of higher education to address the basic mission of teaching, public service and research. Astin (1999) sees reputation as an over- zealous effort to acquire resources because schools are valuing research over teaching, emphasizing excellence over equity, and over valuing test scores from freshmen instead of promoting open access. He also believes that considering scholars and students as “resources” tends to create silos and promotes individualistic values instead of a collective approach including collegueship, social responsibility, collaboration, etc. (Astin, 1999). Further, he believes that schools in their efforts to climb in the rankings put too much stock into well known academic talent and are not investing in incumbent faculty and developing new talent (Astin, 1999).

From a consumer point of view, students and parents may find rankings misleading for some of the same reasons mentioned above. The rankings are flawed as they are too simple to help communicate the diversity of schools and provide enough information to help students find the right institutional fit. Students are advised to consider a wide array of characteristics when selecting an appropriate school for themselves including: instruction, research, athletics, extracurriculars, community interaction, artistic performances, socializing, faculty, financial strength, name recognition, success and satisfaction of its graduates, the quality of its incoming students, its ability to succeed with marginal students, its physical facility, the surrounding community, etc.

Consequently, according to the website CampusVibe it is virtually impossible to reduce all of these considerations into one single ranking or college score (http://www.collegeconfidential.com/college_ranking/bad_rankings.htm, 2010).

In summary, many academics are critical of the *USNWR* rankings, particularly the peer based ranking methodology and discount the outcomes as a beauty contest or popularity contest. However, with few ways to evaluate quality in undergraduate business programs, this ranking is prominently marketed to undergraduate business stakeholders with little research and insight into the inner-world of peer based ranking decisions.

The Purpose

USNWR was the first magazine to rank undergraduate business schools, and the only survey to rely on academic administrators' perceptions of quality to determine the overall ranking of the undergraduate business program and specialty departments. This perception of quality can also be interpreted as an evaluation of the strength of a school's academic brand, commonly defined as the promise of an experience (Moore, R. 2004).

The purpose of this study is to learn how academic administrators are influenced in their perception of academic brands while also gaining insight into

how administrators might actively try to influence and shape the rankings in the *USNWR* undergraduate business school survey. A brand is defined as an association created in the mind of a potential buyer, between a particular make of a product or service and a desired characteristic (Kotler, 1991). Understanding the content and structure of brand knowledge is important because schools spend money on influencing brand perception and stakeholders value the rankings. Learning more about how business school brands emerge and change is of great interest to deans, governing boards and all stakeholders.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on a number of theoretical frameworks to inform the research design and identify the research questions. Resource Dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Tolbert, 1985) and Academic Capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) help us understand how market behaviors are implemented to positively affect the reputation of undergraduate business programs. Slaughter and Leslie use Academic Capitalism to describe market-like behaviors in higher education that might include competition for faculty, tuition, high quality students, external grant funding and other entrepreneurial functions. There is evidence that market-like behavior has been increasing especially as state funding decreases (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Professionalism (Gouldner, 1957) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969)

help explain social networks and how they might have significance to the deans and associate deans when they associate quality with peers. Organizational Culture also helps us understand how behaviors and norms are formed and understood within organizations (Schein, 2004). Organizational culture includes beliefs, norms and values of particular groups of people in organizations. The study of reputation and prestige was also informative in providing definitions and explanations of behaviors (Volkwein, J.F. & Grunig, S.D., (2005). Finally, Integrated Marketing Communication which emphasizes that all forms of communication matter and contribute to the thousands of messages that make a perception of a brand (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Lusch & Vargo, 2006) was used to better understand how deans and associate deans are obtaining information about other schools. These theories intersect to help explain how in an era of shrinking state support and carefully constructed strategic plans, academic administrators are likely to be influenced in their perception of academic brands.

Significance of the Study

In current economic times, state budgets are shrinking more than ever. This means that schools that compete for non-state dollars have an even more important incentive to improve in the national rankings with the hope of attracting more donor and research funding; a function of consumer confidence. In addition, business schools continue to develop market-based strategies to

grow business education and increase revenue streams, defined as academic capitalism. Better understanding how reputation affects the rankings could assist schools in employing more effective brand communication with stakeholders. This study will help us understand competition and market behavior in the context of close rivals in the market. Business schools seem friendly in sharing best practices at conferences; however, there is another side to administrative behavior when it comes to ranking their competition. The background of decision making matters to more fully understand the factors that influence decisions that administrators make when filling out peer rankings.

Exploring what influences administrators' perceptions of quality and how this relates to the *USNWR* rankings for undergraduate business programs could help deans and associate deans make more strategic budget allocations. For example, the amount of "April marketing" just prior to the *USNWR* ranking is striking. "April marketing" is a term associated with the barrage of communication that occurs prior to the deadline for sending in the peer evaluation survey. Just- in-time marketing and raising awareness of a particular new program or initiative through post cards, brochures, and other communication channels is common practice in business schools. Most of the "April marketing" material is mailed to those that complete the peer evaluations. Consequently, my interview subjects helped evaluate what public relations

methods, if any, make a difference in determining quality in the “mind’s eye” of business school deans.

This study also provides greater insight into the professional norms, beliefs, and standards of business school deans and associate deans. The outcomes of the study help us understand the values, rituals and practices that have meaning within business schools. These findings will help inform decisions to spend money on communication strategies including national conferences in which human connections are made verses direct mail marketing.

The *USNWR* “beauty contest” describes the peer evaluation of undergraduate business education. Consequently, many of the statisticians in business schools discount this “non-scientific” poll. However, if we don’t better understand peer influence, business schools may misappropriate the precious funds necessary to keep up with the growing demand for undergraduate business education. Both faculty salaries and student demand continue to grow. Consequently, business school administrators need information to help them better understand the fine art of communicating quality to their peers.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter One focuses on the problem, outlines the purpose, and provides evidence that the research problem

is significant. As an overview, Chapter One also provides an introduction to the theoretical frameworks that guide the research design, data analysis, and assumptions of the study. Chapter Two reflects on the problem as it relates to research in relevant literature. Chapter Three addresses the research design which includes methodology, participant selection, data collection choices, and analysis. Chapter Four provides the findings of the analysis of web-pages which provides insight into the importance of rankings to the undergraduate programs in the study. This chapter also provides the findings relative to the definition of quality, how administrators are influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools and how they complete the *USNWR* ranking ballot. Chapter Five provides the findings of what methods administrators utilize to influence brand perception and how integrated marketing communication is being implemented in business schools. Chapter Six presents the discussion and conclusions that emerged from the study including implications for stakeholders to better understand the nature of peer-based rankings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a road map to better understand the research and context in which the research problem exists. The context of the research is higher education, specifically undergraduate business programs. The literature review begins with understanding business education “by the numbers,” the people that lead business schools and the professional association that shapes it. The next section helps provide the reasons that universities and business schools actively influence their stakeholders in a resource constrained market. Because rankings matter, better understanding the ranking methodologies is explored. Perception of quality may be affected by reputation, marketing, branding and the implementation of modern marketing solutions (integrated marketing communication). Consequently, research in these areas is reviewed. Finally, theorists studying academic quality are mentioned to help provide a foundation for evaluating academic excellence to determine if perceptions of quality and real quality have anything to do with each other.

Understanding Business Education

Undergraduate business education captures a significant market share of students in higher education. As such, this section explores undergraduate

business education by the numbers, the characteristics of those leading business schools and the professional organization that shapes management education.

According to the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) there are 660 business schools in the U.S. and 481 outside the U.S. for a total of 1,141 member institutions (AACSB, 2010). The majority of those that have passed national standards in business education and received accreditation through AACSB have undergraduate programs, 528 schools. Fifty-five percent of the business schools are public and forty-five percent are private. In the Carnegie Classifications, 47.3% are Master's Colleges and Universities, 21.1% are Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive, with 13.9% Doctoral/Research Universities-Intensive. In 2006-07 the greatest numbers of business bachelor's degrees were awarded totaling 327,531 (US Dept. of Educ., 2006). The Dean of Villanova's School of Business, James Danko tells stakeholders that this "is the era of the undergraduate business student" (Shinn, 2006, p. 26).

Who are the leaders of the business colleges and what are their roles? In 2008, 83.15% of the deans were male and 16.9% female, with a slow trend showing an increase over time.

Table 2: Percentage of Deans by Gender at AACSB International Member Schools 2006–2008 (AACSB, Data Direct 2010)

Year	Male	Female
2006	85%	15%
2007	85%	16%
2008	83%	17%

The studies of Professionalism indicate that the background of academics helps define not only their expertise, but their codes of ethics in serving clients and society (Furner, 1975; Bledstein, 1976; Metzger, 1987; and Haskell, 1977 in Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Durkheim in Rhoades, 1997). The most popular backgrounds of deans in AACSB institutions include economics (47), marketing (36), organizational behavior (32), accounting (27), finance (21), strategic management (21) and operations management (6).

Table 3: Background of Deans at AACSB Institutions, 2007 (From Joe Mondello, AACSB, personal communication, Nov. 19, 2009)

Discipline of Highest Degree	Number of Deans
Accounting	27
Agricultural Economics	1
anthropology/sociology	1
applied economics	1
Business Education	4
Business law	7
Demography	1
Economics	47
Ed.D	1
education administration	1
Education/Instructional design and technology	1
Educational Leadership	1
Electrical Engineering	1
English	1

Finance	21
History	1
Industrial Engineering	2
Industrial Relations	1
Info systems	8
international business	1
international management	1
Labor & Industrial Relations	1
Law	2
Marketing	36
Mass communications	1
MBA	1
Org Behavior/HR	32
Political Sciene with OB	1
Prod/op management	16
Psychology	3
Quant methods	11
social psychology	1
Sociology	1
Strategic management	21
Systems Management	1
Technology	1
Transportation and Logistics	2
Urban and Regional Planning	1
Vocational Education	1

The average business school dean salary was \$213,000 with a mean operating budget of \$16 million and a mean endowment of \$25 million (AACSB, 2010). The endowment numbers are significant, because many business school deans are trying to replace shrinking state financial support.

**Table 4: Average Operating Budgets of AACSB International Member Institutions 2008-09
Represented in U.S. Currency (AACSB, 2010).**

Location	Count	Mean	75%	Median	25%
United States	504	\$15,906,478	\$18,563,551	\$8,337,045	\$4,398,722
Worldwide	157	\$32,499,450	\$43,035,074	\$19,725,422	\$9,768,029

Table 5: Distribution of Endowments - U.S. (2007-2008), (AACSB,2010)

Range	Number	Percent
0	66	13.2
1-1,000,000	67	13.4
1,000,001-5,000,000	117	23.4
5,000,001-20,000,000	130	25.9
20,000,001-50,000,000	56	11.2
50,000,001-100,000,000	34	6.8
100,000,001-200,000,000	16	3.2
200,000,001-300,000,000	10	2.1
300,000,001- 400,000,000	2	0.4
More than 400,000,000	2	0.8
Totals	500	100

While running their business schools, deans and leadership teams work to attract top students, hire the best faculty, offer an innovative curriculum and build the best facilities (Shinn, 2006). Sometimes the dean of a business school informally bears the title CEO because they run complex organizations, manage diverse staff, travel the world, influence stakeholders and face challenges of operating in complex environments (Bickerstaffe, 2006). There often is too little time in a full day to focus on the most important dean roles of meeting with donors, developing strategic corporate partnerships, or spending time with alumni and parents. The dean often trusts the daily operation of the business school to faculty and administrative deans to oversee research and student programs. Many deans work to leave a legacy for their school. This legacy may

include building a strong and enduring school/program's culture and reputation, new building or leaving significant new endowments (Klimoski, 2007).

International and domestic business schools are governed by the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Through program accreditation, research, and the discovery and communication of best practices, AACSB advances business education. Since 1916, AACSB has been the largest accrediting agency for bachelors, masters and doctoral programs in business and accounting (AACSB, 2007). Faculty development programs, conferences, interest groups, publications and research on emerging trends in business education bring the business school community together in understanding common goals between business educators and corporations that hire business graduates. Influence within academic communities like this is important as academic communities promote networking and advocacy perspectives (Maggioto, 1991). The professional organization also helps identify and develop future leaders of business education (Laden, 1996).

Professionalization is an important framework for this study because business education is formed around a cohesive network of focused business school leaders. Professionalization is illustrated by management education's professional codes and regulations similar to schools of medicine and law

(Pfeffer, 2007). This “professionalism” includes loyalty to the organization (AACSB); commitment to professional skills and values; and reference group orientation (Gouldner, 1954, 1957, 1958). Consequently, business schools are collaborative in their efforts to share best practices while competitive in their efforts to gain national prominence.

Competition for Resources

Why do business schools spend time and money on efforts to position themselves for national prominence? Isn't it enough to have full classrooms, productive faculty and the respect of local stakeholders? Organizational theorists believe that situations in which organizations operate and the pressures and constraints in which they operate shape behavior of the leaders (Pfeffer, 1977). In the twenty-first century the state support for higher education is shrinking. As a result, many business schools have worked to develop financial independence from the state. Academic fields related to market driven areas (i.e. science, engineering, and business) are known to engage in the highest activities relative to financial opportunities from stakeholders (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In announcing the University of Maryland's Smith School of Business' Great Expectations Capital Campaign their brochure proudly states, “The Smith School receives only 10% of its operating budget from the State of Maryland” (Smith Business, 2008). AACSB (2010) reports that the mean operating budget of

reporting schools in the United States is \$15,906,478. In addition, the mean 2008-2009 endowments for business schools is \$25,123,210. From these numbers it is apparent that non-state funding of business schools is significant.

Universities and their respective colleges and programs are now competing in quasi-markets as changes in resource dependence have made them more entrepreneurial (Geiger, 2004; Kirp, 2003; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The need for financial, physical and informational resources explains their resource dependence and as a result business schools are capitalizing on external networks and social relationships to find resources. Academic Capitalism is a theory that explains these market activities (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) summarize the trend, "market behaviors have come to permeate almost all aspects of colleges and universities, from research to instruction" (p. 305). For business schools this market-like behavior translates into relationship management involving many stakeholders. If a school is to be viewed as nationally prominent, it is likely to attract top people (faculty, students, alumni, national leaders) and resources (national grants, philanthropists, legislators, parents, etc).

Reputation as Evidenced in National Rankings

Consequently, a business school dean is faced with developing strategies and tools to communicate the quality of the school's people and academic programs. Capitalizing on the academic stakeholders' need for information on quality, for-profit magazines developed ranking rubrics and sell publications promoting academic rankings. Institutions compete for relative positions in their particular strata, top twenty, top fifty, etc. (Winston, 1995).

While national rankings of universities and schools are controversial, they do seem to matter. The prestige of an institution equates to more students wanting to attend and strong demand for its brand (Geiger, 2004). Social identity becomes important for both students and the institutions. Membership in similarly ranked organizations improves positive social identity (Roa, Davis & Ward, 2000). Achieving a high ranking influences both the quantity and academic quality of applicants and also influences the numbers of students that will enroll. Highly ranked prestigious schools also offer less grant aid to those that enroll (Monk & Ehrenberg, 1999; Ehrenberg, 2000). Machung (1998) studied students' and parents' use of *USNWR* rankings and found two-thirds of high achieving seniors felt the rankings were "very helpful" in understanding a college's quality. Students with high incomes and/or who are high achievers are most likely to use rankings for college selection (Sanoff, 2007). Academic

reputation is a powerful influence on students, more powerful than the advice of advisors or the influences of families (McDonough & Pietal, 1997).

The rankings seem even more important for selective, highly priced private schools. Research demonstrates that a ranking decline in a private school reduces the academic quality and number of applicants including reducing those that will actually enroll. Elite private schools are in intense competition with one another for undergraduates, graduates, professional programs, faculty members, research grants, private donations and other sources of revenue that may be affected by the rankings of their programs (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999).

There is also a correlation between being included in top rankings and an increase in general expenditure per student. According to economists Zhe Jin and Whalley (2006) this is attributed to an increase in state appropriation revenue per student. Overall, they explain that “*USNWR* rankings generate increased attention to the issue of college quality” (p. 1). Often, deans and presidents can leverage top rankings, while making the argument that to maintain stature additional investment is needed in their university, college or program. Because some rankings are based on data, additional funding can strategically improve several outcomes that may determine the rankings (such as faculty salaries, enrollment, career placement figures, etc). Inclusion in the *USNWR* ranking causes colleges to increase educational and general

expenditures per student by 3.2% , funded by a 6.8% increase from state appropriations based on a study from 1987 to 1995 (Jin & Whalley, 2007).

College presidents are often embroiled in controversy when it comes to rankings. Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University may earn an additional \$60,000 if he can improve the ranking of his university (Schaefer & Riley, 2007). There seems to be a constant discontent among academic leaders as they feel they are being held “hostage” by the rankings. There are many instances of university presidents trying to band together to boycott rankings. The President of Clarkson University, Anthony Collins, was asked to be in a group of presidents to boycott the *USNWR* rankings. “My colleague asked, wasn’t I upset that *USNWR* had dubbed my top-tier national university and A+ School for B Students?” (Collins, 2007). The President responded that he feels better outcome measures should include success of alumni and commercialization of research; however, the 15 indicators of excellence used by *USNWR* are important metrics in university management. University president, Anthony Collins, is willing to be measured in the rankings and states that it is important for each institution to communicate to prospective students about the strengths, individual differences, and vast options that students have in selecting their universities (Collins, 2007).

Explaining the Rankings

The higher education research and academic stakeholders often characterize the “rankings” of for-profit magazines as one generalizable methodology, assuming a data driven rubric. This section explores and explains the differences in *USNWR* ranking methodologies comparing university ranking methods and single program rubrics.

There are currently over 100 college guidebooks, yet *USNWR*, the first annual college ranking continues to be the most influential (Jin &Walley, 2007). *USNWR* was the first to actually rank universities and programs. Every year *USNWR* sells over 2.2 million copies of its college issue. The publication reaches 11 million people (Dichev, 2001).

In addition to the obvious financial incentive to *USNWR*, the editors state altruistic reasons for the publication. They believe that selecting a university is one of the most important financial decisions a family makes. Households with a college degree demonstrated twice as much income in comparison to those with only a high school diploma (*USNWR*, 2008). The *USNWR* editors believe that the rankings provide reliable and consistent information that allows comparability of institutions. In addition, the editors “carry no water for the teams” meaning their work is fair and objective (*USNWR*, 2008). The editors are also careful to suggest that prospective students should utilize a comprehensive

communication model when deciding on a school including parents, counselors, advisers, college catalogs, view books and websites and campus visits.

It is important to understand the history and nuances of university ranking systems. In 1983 *USNWR* first published numerical rankings of colleges and universities. As tuition prices escalated the public response to the rankings grew. The first two *USNWR* rankings (1983, 1985) were based on surveys of college presidents. Consequently, they reflected institutional reputation tracked closely to selectivity. In 1987, the magazine surveyed college presidents again and published ranking results in *USNWR* and in a new book “America’s Best Colleges”, including ranking of law, business, medical and engineering schools. Today, *USNWR* university ranking system incorporates data on a weighted average of seven broad categories: academic reputation (25 percent); retention rate (20 percent); faculty resources (20 percent), student selectivity (15 percent); financial resources (10 percent), alumni giving (5 percent) and graduation rate (5 percent). These categories are further extended to include 16 more variables: academic reputation; freshman applicants admitted; percentage of freshman in the top 10% of their class; average SAT or ACT of freshman; average faculty compensation; percentage of faculty with a PHD; percentage of full-time faculty; student-faculty ratio; percentage of small classes up to 19 students; percentage of classes 50 or greater; six year graduation rate; freshman retention; average

education expenditures per student; the alumni giving rate; an institution's graduation rates, and resources (Morse & Flanigan, 2000). *USNWR* also sorts universities into categories based on the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Carnegie Classifications. This categorization is consistent with the US Dept of Education's classification for grants and research rankings (Morse & Flanigan, 2007). The editors have been credited with responsive behavior to critics and have changed methodology respective to feedback from college presidents. Changes include making the methodology more transparent, tightening their data definitions and cross-checking figures with other sources. In response to criticism that the rankings looked like "scores" with the illusion of precision, the methodology became more transparent. To encourage open dialog with college administrators, *USNWR* has three advisory committees; college admissions deans, high school counselors and institutional researchers (Sanoff, 2007).

Contrast the thorough details of the university ranking methodology just outlined with the simple methodology of perception of quality in the *USNWR* undergraduate business program ranking. *USNWR* surveys two representatives (usually deans and associate deans) per AACSB accredited business school. Respondents are asked to evaluate the quality of the undergraduate programs they are familiar with from 1 (marginal) to 5 (distinguished) including a category

for “don’t know”. This is the simple rubric, based solely on reputation. In 2007, 44% of those surveyed responded (*USNWR methodology, 2008*) and in 2008, 38% responded, and 42% responded in 2009 (*USNWR methodology, 2009*).

According to a 2006 AACSB conference session on undergraduate rankings, in 2002 only one school in the top 25 had moved more than 10 spots over the entire span of the rankings (25 to 39 to 25). Peer rankings change very little as half of the top 40 experienced .1 change (1999-2002). Public and private schools are fairly equal in the top rankings. In the top 40, 23 schools were public, primarily large state flagship schools and 17 were private schools (*USNWR, 2009*).

Participants in the session, undergraduate program administrators, reported that undergraduate rankings are less significant than MBA rankings. Andrea Hershatter, Emory Associate Dean, reported during an AACSB break-out session that the Goizueta School is the highest ranked program on campus making it a big marketing opportunity for the university.

Much research has been conducted on the pros and cons of the data driven university and Masters of Business Administration (MBA) ranking approach (*Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Dichev, 1999; Martins, 2005*). Little has been researched about the peer based ranking of undergraduate business programs as most of the literature discounts the practice as a “beauty contest” or “popularity contest”. Consequently, the question remains, what impacts peers’ perception of

reputation, thus constituting the ranking scores? Little research has been conducted to try to understand how reputations are formed and how academic brands are built for undergraduate business school programs.

Is the data driven methodology used for university and MBA rankings better? At first, the data driven approach seems the most effective method for stakeholders to understand and compare schools. However, over time administrators have begun to feel the negative effects. AACSB commissioned a task force to review business school rankings. In the report, *Business School Rankings Dilemma* (2005), the authors identify the overall problem of ranking schools, "rankings collapse quality into a single dimension - a number. They also limit the number of ranked programs, and apply the same formula regardless of a program's mission or orientation" (p.6). Other negatives associated with data driven rankings include the expense of gathering and reporting data, sometime so time-consuming specific personnel must be employed. Data reported is often ill defined and inconsistent from publication to publication. The task force also states that they fear the public has developed bias toward only the best business schools and are narrow in their definition of the breadth and value of MBA programs. Concern also arises from business schools becoming more alike as they are compared on like scales (Gioia & Corley, 2002). When trying to influence specific categories of a ranking rubric negative

outcomes have included resources spent on wining and dining recruiters to gain positive feedback on the recruiter survey. In addition, in some cases, luxurious facilities are built for MBA students to try to influence favorable student evaluations. Both of these ranking outcomes translate to higher tuition and have little to do with learning outcomes and quality. Another negative outcome, as outlined in the report, demonstrates that student “selectivity” has the negative outcome of shrinking program size and reducing diversity to improve statistics (i.e. GMAT scores) measured by the rankings. For undergraduate programs and PhD programs in business schools, the importance of the MBA rankings has driven resource decisions (Shields, 2007). In an interesting summary of the report, the authors worry that AACSB is being trumped by media rankings. AACSB believes that the shift to a consumer-driven market is enhancing the power and reputation of rankings over the Association’s methods of evaluating quality through accreditation.

Research on Prestige and Reputation

Students, parents, employers and other business school stakeholders utilize rankings to help determine the reputation of a school (Pryor et al., 2007). It is generally understood that the *USNWR* peer assessment scores represent the general reputation of the program measured (Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2009).

Reputation is an area of great confusion in research literature. In management, corporate reputation is studied. In higher education the study of prestige incorporates reputation. Reputation in the management literature is defined as the result of a series of perceptions over time (Fombrun and Van Riel, 1997). Identity, image, and reputation are often used to describe the same things (Wartick, 2002). Identity can also be defined as the 'organization's external presentation of itself to its various stakeholders and communication strategies used to distinguish itself from all other organizations' (Marwick and Fill, 1997). Another definition of corporate identity concluded that a firm's image is the internal identity underlying its efforts to present itself to others (Bromley, 2001). After a comprehensive study of the use of reputation in academic literature, authors Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty (2006) recommend that researchers define reputation "in terms of estimation, judgment, evaluation and opinion."

Higher education research focuses on prestige as a function of reputation. According to research looking at reputation of universities' undergraduate programs, two major inputs determine reputation: institutional size and student selectivity (Astin 1970; Astin and Lee 1972; Astin and Solomon 1981; Grunig 1997; Porter and Toutkoushian 2002; Schmitz 1993; Solomon and Astin 1981; Volkwein 1989). Researchers have determined a correlation between talented faculty and talented students. Faculty quality is often determined by research

activity which impacts a school's reputation. Research quality impresses top students and the aggregate of high quality faculty attracting high quality students results in a prestigious reputation (Blau, 1994).

Business schools, tend to emulate the activities of for-profit firms. As a result marketing and customer relations are important strategies as the administrators understand the importance of brand positioning. Better understanding how stakeholders are influenced in their judgment of a brand incorporates the management literature on reputation and higher education research on prestige.

The Role of Marketing

How do academic administrators receive and interpret information regarding quality of peer business programs? Understanding market driven approaches, business schools have actively relied on marketing practices to shape their national reputations in attracting and educating top students, hiring rising star faculty and assuring alumni and stakeholders of attention to quality (Moore, 2004). When schools set tuition and provide discounts through financial aid, this is a version of pricing. Revamping the curriculum is an example of product development (Krachenberg, 1972). Because *USNWR* places great weight on "selectivity" admissions strategies often include driving in applications, even if

the possibility of selection is low (Kirp & Holman, 2004). This section will help explain the role of marketing in business schools.

Marketing is complex and researchers have identified specific terms, practices and definitions. In particular marketing is the general word for efforts that an organization employs to effect specific objectives (Tillinghast, 2001). Objectives can include product sales, evoking a feeling about a brand and helping shareholders feel positive about an organization. Methods of marketing can include advertising in media, events promotion, direct mail, telephone campaigns, social media, etc. (Tillinghast, 2001). Consequently, advertising is a specific tactic in a marketing mix. Advertising usually involves media owners selling “inventory” to organizations that create specific brand messages. Three elements comprise advertising including a target audience, message, and a medium used to channel the message (Tillinghast, 2001). Branding is distinguished as a consumers feeling about an organization or product comprised of many direct and indirect interactions over time. An organization can develop a creative well received advertising campaign but the advertising can't create an organization or product that is something it is not (BrandCultureTalk, posted Sept. 14, 2008).

Higher education is considered a service and services marketing emerged as a distinct element in marketing beginning in the 1970's (Lek, 1994; Berry &

Parsuraman, 1993, Fisk et al, 1993). For the past 20 years interest in services marketing has grown because of the increasing importance of the service industry in the knowledge based economy (Fisk et al, 1993). A useful conceptual foundation for research into education as a service includes Lovelocks (1983) five criteria framework. First, education uses people and knowledge rather than equipment (Thomas, 1978) and intangible transactions (Shostack, 1977). Second, the relationship with the customer is continuous and involves “memberships” and a relationship with the provider (Lovelock, 1983). Third, an increasing trend in education includes the customization of the service through short-term degree programs, on-line programs, etc. (Nicholls, 1987). Fourth, demand can outpace supply and universities must manage through economic cycles with limitations based on staff, physical facilities and courses. Finally, the method of service can include multiple outlets, one specific site or on-line delivery (Soutar and Mazzarol, 1995).

In the basics of understanding marketing, product, price, place and promotion are emphasized (McCarthy, 1964). Today, however, marketing frameworks move beyond this functional approach to include communication. Communication frameworks including listening, answering and informing explains that brand messages are sent everyday through every action of the organization and its employees (Schultz, 1993). Examples of this range from

what is emphasized in a dean's address to faculty members, how the dean dresses, what he or she talks about informally, and the perception of what the organization values (Watzlawick, Bavela and Jackson, 1967). For leaders interested in improving perception of quality and brand strength a spectrum of planned market communication, unplanned word of mouth communication, and product, and service messages must be delivered (Duncan & Moriarity, 1998). Unfortunately, university administrators may not always understand the comprehensive nature of marketing and strategies for communication beyond advertising. An example of necessary communication beyond advertising includes retention efforts to keep students in school, because it is less expensive than recruiting new ones. Pepper and Rogers (1993) point out that it costs six to nine times more to acquire a new customer than an effective focus on customer retention.

Another modern practice in service marketing includes focus on relationships and meaning. Personal and social relationships become particularly important (Planalp, 1989). Schramm, (1973) notes that the study of communication is fundamentally the study of relationships. When we consider this in the context of higher education institutional investment in lobbyists, personnel that bring research groups together to attract large grant programs, and development/advancement teams are good examples of purposefully

orchestrating valuable relationships with customers and key stakeholders.

Marketing experts emphasize that the total of the brand relationships becomes the brand value (Duncan & Moriarity, 1997).

Defining Branding

Branding is a well defined area of marketing research (Aaker, 1996; Alreck & Settle, 199; Berry, 2000; Bloom, Hoefflet, Keller & Basurto, 2006; Keller, 2002, 2003; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Srivastava, Shervani & Fahey, 1998). Billions of dollars are invested in building a brand defined as the promise of an experience in which the quality and value matches a product's name (Marconi, 1993).

Sometimes the product becomes directly associated with the brand name (i.e. Coke, Klennex, and Xerox). However there is a difference between brand name and a true brand. The brand includes internalized impressions, distinction, and functional and emotional benefits, while the brand name describes a specific product or products (Knapp, 2000). The most successful brands are distinct and add value in the mind of the consumer. Today, university brands are used to sell merchandize and educational products. Harvard, for example is well regarded as an elite university. Leveraging its perception of quality and the public's desire to be associated with the Harvard brand, it sells repackaged multi-volumes of great books (the Harvard Classics), sweatshirts, educational materials and

teaching tools. All of this illustrates Harvard's effective use of its commercial value and brand (Marconi, 1993).

However, brand value like this rarely emerges without a great deal of market positioning (Moore, 2004). Because universities are comprehensive conglomerates, brands must be carefully coordinated for consistency of shared goals. This applies from the basics of logos to the varied nature of college and department web sites. Brand value is created by the process of branding defined as creating relationships between the product/service and a target market (Alreck & Settle, 1999).

An academic brand communicates the nature of the quality of its offerings, prestige of faculty, financial resources, productivity of research, private sector networks, etc. The target markets include prospective students, their parents, faculty, alumni, philanthropists and corporate recruiters (Mars, Rhoades & Slaughter, 2008). Reputations of schools have historically been artifacts of age, size and endowments. However, in this new information economy, there is more evidence that reputations consist of more than these indicators. As an example, we know that athletic dominance seems to influence public perception of quality and produces perception of brand strength (Moore, 2004).

In developing a brand the acronym DREAM (differentiation, relevance, esteem, awareness, and mind's eye) has been used (Knapp, 2000). Most colleges

and universities compete within well defined categories ranging from liberal arts colleges to research universities. However, higher education leaders are now realizing that being different is important. Some schools capitalize on the unique nature of the student body; others feature small class size or specific programs like internships. The bottom line is that some distinctive characteristic is selected and featured as a unique offering within the school's market segment (Moore, 2004). Most effective differentiation strategies come from an already strongly held feeling about the brand's strengths.

Because we are studying business schools it is important to document the recent trend in naming business colleges. Thirty-two of the top 50 ranked business schools have names (i.e. Wharton, Sloan, Haas, etc.), (Mars, Rhoades & Slaughter, 2002). The monetary gifts to the schools for this naming privilege amounted to more than \$1 billion. The authors concluded that academic branding, in terms of college naming, is a significant trend in the most prestigious sectors of management schools (Mars, Rhoades & Slaughter, 2002).

Academic Excellence

True brand strategy includes understanding the brand's benefits- functional and emotional, with quality as a well defined expectation (Knapp, 2000). Consequently, is there a connection between academic brand strength for *USNWR* highly ranked undergraduate business schools and specific measures of

quality defined by higher education scholars? An alternative explanation (if quality is not known) is a systematic bias in evaluation known as the halo effect (Leuthesser, Kohli & Harich, 1995) in which raters' rely on common perception, not distinct brand attributes.

Evaluating academic excellence can be measured by a variety of methods. Pascarella (2001) indicates that the most common methods of measuring excellence include reputation and ranking; student and alumni outcomes; or measuring effective processes and practices. Effective processes and practices could include quality of teaching, the extent and nature of the interaction with faculty and peers, the effectiveness of student affairs programming, the focus and intensity of academic experience, and overall level of student engagement. Another way to consider educational excellence is to understand eight outcomes that are important in strong academic institutions: communication skills; critical thinking; moral reasoning; preparation for citizenship; understanding diversity; preparation for a global society; acquisition of breadth of interests; and preparation for a career (Bok, 2005). Coincidentally, a recent National Undergraduate Business School Symposium (NUBS, 2008) meeting at the University of Virginia, for top 25 ranked undergraduate program administrators, emphasized Bok's categories when soliciting "best practice" presentations for the

symposium. Perhaps perception of quality has a closer tie to best practices than one might think.

This journey through relevant streams of research demonstrates that resource dependency and market-like approaches to obtaining support (academic capitalism) are significant to universities and colleges as they are paying more attention to marketing and business school branding practices. Some stakeholders believe performance in academic rankings is an important measure of brand strength. While many have researched *USNWR* universities and MBA rankings, few have actually studied the *USNWR* undergraduate business schools perception based rankings. This is because the methodology is often discounted. However, 38-44% of the respondents annually complete the survey and many schools capitalize on the rankings for their marketing materials. This study will help to better understand what shapes administrators' perception of quality.

Further, AACSB calls for more research on rankings and quality (AACSB, 2005). The professional association is interested in studies (a) explaining methods, validity and impacts (b) the link between research, teaching and practice and (c) clusters of schools that are similar in quality. AACSB wants to rethink ranking and move to rating standards (AACSB, 2005).

This research is intended to fill a gap in the ranking literature. Business school deans spend money on marketing to influence the perception of their brands.

Stakeholders consistently ask about rankings. I hope to explore the effectiveness of marketing strategies and professional networks in understanding perception relative to business school brands and USNWR rankings of undergraduate programs.

Theoretical Frameworks

The proposed study draws on a number of theoretical frameworks to inform the research design and identify the research questions. Resource Dependency (Tolbert, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) and Academic Capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) help us understand the need for marketing and activities that involve improving a school's reputation with stakeholders. The impact of professionalism as professional associations' create communities that create meaning (Gouldner, 1957) and symbolic interactionism in which meaning arises within the interaction between people (Blumer, 1969). Both theories explain social relationships in decision making. The model proposed by Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) explains how inputs including institutional characteristics, faculty resources and student resources produce faculty and student outcomes and ultimately form the reputation and prestige of an institution or program. Finally, Integrated Marketing Communication which emphasizes that all forms of communication matter to contribute to the thousands of messages that make a perception of a brand (Duncan & Moriarty,

1998; Lusch & Vargo, 2006) is used as a framework for research questions. These theories intersect to help explain why activities to influence stakeholders' perception of quality are important to business schools in an era of shrinking state support and how academic administrators are likely to be influenced in their perception of academic brands.

Resource Dependency

Resource dependency suggests that organizations that are starved of financial resources will become entrepreneurial and seek other revenue sources (Slaughter & Leslie, 1999). As state support for higher education begins to decline, state schools have implemented strategies consistent with resource dependency theory including seeking students that pay a higher price for tuition (out of state and international students) and modern academic-industry partnerships to increase research funding (Slaughter & Leslie, 1999). An institution's dependence on resources shapes practices and organizational development (Tolbert, 1985). Examples of personnel emerging to assist institutions in finding new revenue streams include development officers, alumni relations, admissions directors and personnel working directly with populations creating new sources of revenue. Poovey (2001) points out the increasing costs to institutions as they become part of a more aggressive and competitive market place. With tight budgets, the reliance on reputation, perception of prestige and pleasing stakeholders is critical

for financial support. Universities are known as prestige maximizers (Weiner 1986; Fairweather 1988; Winston 1997) as they consistently engage in activities that promote status among universities as they compete for additional resources from national granting organizations and private donors.

Academic Capitalism

Academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) helps provide the overarching framework that in the new information economy, higher education has adapted to become more entrepreneurial and more aligned with practices that serve market functions. The theorists help explain why and how academic institutions and education have become products in very competitive markets. Academic Capitalism helps justify marketing, branding and reputation as important features in the market driven, highly competitive industry of higher education.

Higher education has moved beyond student as customers and has employed robust marketing techniques to reach high-ability students and those able to afford higher tuition. In the new information economy, students increasingly see college and university choice as a life style decision. Colleges and universities have turned to students for higher tuition in majors that offer greater future returns (business and engineering). This has heightened students'

and parents' consumer consciousness about what they expect from their academic experience (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Consequently, today's students are more than learners; they are critical consumers that demand higher expectations from higher education.

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) explain academic capitalism through new circuits of knowledge. This is illustrated by academic institutions increasing reliance on outside evaluators to judge academic performance. Publications like *USNWR* in some cases are more important to consumers than accrediting associations and peer review, thus creating new circuits of knowledge (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Another plank of academic capitalism includes the emergence of interstitial organization. As colleges and universities compete more actively in the marketplace, new organizations have developed in the space between higher education and the market. Examples of interstitial organizations include licensing offices, development offices and interstitial marketing and PR units (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

With an increased emphasis on marketing and developing a brand that attracts students and investors, new employees and programs have emerged in higher education. An example of a new title that reflects consumer centric

approaches, from the University of Florida, Warrington School of Business, academic advisors have recently become “career coaches.” Other public relations jobs including parent relationship managers that write parent correspondence and e-newsletters are common. In academic capitalism these new jobs are described as extended managerial capacity (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

The most important of the explanations offered to understand academic capitalism for this study includes the understanding of higher education market behaviors. “Colleges and universities have substantially increased their marketing activities, seeking to shape the perceptions and choices of consumers in the student marketplace” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004, p.283). Because higher education is more like a commodity to be consumed, non-instructional programs, buildings and staff make an institution more attractive for a more responsive, personal learning experience (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Professionalism and Institution Theory

Accreditation, AACSB, and codes of standards and ethics, define business schools as professional schools and deans as professionals. Professionalism studies professions and the identity of the people that uphold the areas of expertise and codes of ethics to serve clients and society (Bledstein, 1976; Durkheim in Rhoades, 1997; Furner, 1975; and Haskell, 1977 in Slaughter and

Leslie, 1997; Metzger, 1987). This body of knowledge helps understand why and how business schools interact and may become similar based on international regulatory standards through AACSB. Further, loyalty to the organization; commitment to professional values and skills; and developing a professional group for reference summarize Gouldner's (1958) early characterization of professionalism defined by cosmopolitans (those aligned to their professions) and locals (those aligned to their organizations/specific institutions). Critical theorists see professionals as groups who seek to establish and maintain monopolies of knowledge. Sometimes these monopolies align themselves with powerful interests (Larson, 1977; Silva and Slaughter, 1980).

Professionalism is also seen as the efforts of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work (Larson, 1977; Collins, 1979). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) illustrate through normative isomorphism that professionalism in higher education is legitimized through academic specialties and the growth of professional networks that unite the professions across the world. "Such mechanisms create a pool of almost interchangeable individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organizations and possess a similarity of orientation and disposition" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 152).

Institutional theory is another description for the web that binds people into professions (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). According to these theorists "organizations

and the individuals who populate them are suspended in a web of values, norms, rules, beliefs, and taken-for-granted assumptions, that are at least partially of their own making" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 93). These norms often come about because society dictates predictability in organizations so the organizations can receive support and legitimacy (Scott & Meyer, 1991). Often organizations copy or mimic the norms of these recognized and rewarded organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) label this mimetic isomorphism in which organizations come to resemble one another. According to Jencks and Reisman (1969) professions are self regulating guilds. As such the membership determines who can practice and sets standards that govern behavior. For example, a research institution values research productivity and hires and promotes its faculty accordingly. Unfortunately, some teaching institutions in their quest for enhanced prestige design their educational experience and faculty criteria in a similar fashion even though their missions are dependent on teaching and attracting students. The ever present quest for academic prestige and the governing principles recognized by higher education including specific discipline accrediting agencies results in diverse institutions growing to resemble each other rather than embracing unique individual differences.

Both professionalism and institutional theory will help provide the grounded theory to explain norms and standards that business schools might share in their approach to best practices and perceptions of quality relative to the rankings.

Symbolic Interactionism

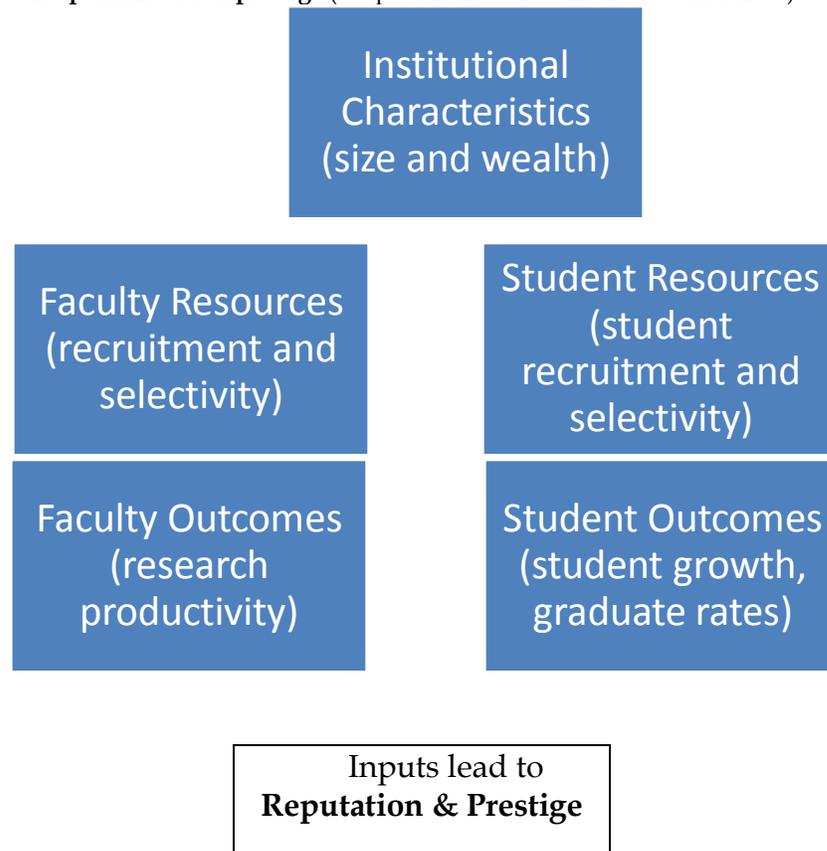
Symbolic interactionism theory helps to understand how people and organizations obtain information and form meaning (Blumer, 1969). Communication is characterized by interactions between individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions. Social networks is a more modern term that defines the premise that people obtain information and make decisions based in response to one another. In practice, Blumer illustrates that networks do not function automatically. Networks function because people at different points provide the meaning of the situation in which they are called to act. Each member of the social network brings unique meanings, schemes for interpretation and values to interpretation of situations, social roles or ideas. This theory helps provide the basis for how administrators might utilize a social network to provide meanings associated with perception of quality of an institution.

Institutional Prestige and Reputation

According to Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) university prestige is dependent on resources and reputation. Astin (1985) introduced a model that emphasized resources, faculty credentials, external funding, student test scores, and peer ratings. Volkwein and Grunig, (2005) found that the peer ratings were generally accepted as a legitimate reflection of peer beliefs about a university and their programs. A conceptual model developed by Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) is tested in this study. These authors developed their model based on the belief that 'universities interact with their environments in ways that enhance the acquisition of human and financial resources' (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). They believe that in both public and private schools institutional characteristics (size and wealth) impact faculty and students that in turn impact faculty and student outcomes including faculty research and student graduation rates. These factors influence institutional prestige, thus attracting better and better faculty and students over time. Reputation becomes a cycle. Volkwein and Sweitzer used this model (Table 4) to illustrate reputation in their research on *USNWR* graduate professional school rankings including business, education, engineering, law and medicine). Because these schools compete for the best students and faculty while also investing in their success through services, budgets of graduate schools are

often enrollment driven, with significant incentives to increase enrollment to maximize resources for the reputation cycle.

Figure 2: **Conceptual model of prestige** (adapted from Volkwein and Sweitzer 2006)



Organizational Culture

Many researchers have studied the traditional belief that academic cultures and subcultures are rooted in disciplines (Becher, 1989, 1994; Biglan, 1973; Ylijoki, 2000) or in situations (Clark 1970, 1998; Tierney, 1991). Organization culture is a

broad concept and includes beliefs, norms and values that contribute to the understandings and meanings in organizations.

Within higher education the organization and culture is complex given the cultural forces that define and sustain the environment, affect change, and define the organization and its groups (Shein, 2004). Shein's model demonstrates that culture exists on three distinct levels.

In level one, Shien (2004) demonstrates that culture is made up of artifacts including observable structures and procedures observed through sub group behaviors. Artifacts may include curriculum, organizational charts, policies and procedures, mentoring and extra-curricular activities. Dress and professional etiquette may also be artifacts.

Espoused beliefs and values are the second level of cultural analysis. Observable group behaviors are commonly driven by shared beliefs and norms. These values and norms are developed from shared group experiences socially validated by members over time (Shein, 2004).

The third level of culture, according to Shein (2004) includes basic assumptions. While not observable, basic assumptions are effective in determining how members view, react and process organizational traits, structures and changes.

Undergraduate business programs relate to Shein's work because they often have similar cultures, often influenced by corporate cultures as schools work closely with employers to build experiences that prepare students for "the real world". Shein's framework will be used to help evaluate the language, norms and understanding of deans and associate deans as they respond to the research questions about perception of quality.

Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a framework for studying branding (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998) and helps develop key questions for the study. Brand value is more than persuasion; it is linked to all communication. Understanding methods of communication and developing relationships may play a very important part in developing brand awareness. These are significant topics outlined in the IMC framework:

1. Identify which department, program, or person is the source of messages that stakeholders' receive and where and how they are being received.
2. Understanding message impact as a strategic function
3. Understanding broad communication functions in brand impact: event marketing, direct marketing, feature promotion, customer service, and brand messages other than marketing.
4. Understand key contact points in customer service to promote positive branding.

5. Movement from transaction to relationship driven business in which customers' histories are known and interactions are more personalized and captured through technology.

These topics will provide insight into interview questions when trying to understand how academic administrators try to influence the perception of their brands to academic stakeholders.

The goal of this study is to better understand how academic administrators are influenced in their perception of academic brands while also trying to learn how they might actively try to influence and shape their brand, including the *USNWR* undergraduate business school ranking. The market theories including resource dependence and academic capitalism help set the context for heightened activity from business deans to improve academic reputation and brand strength. Professionalism, institutional theory, symbolic interactionism, reputation, and organizational culture are the selected theories providing the basis for understanding the communication of individuals within groups and the role of professional networks. Finally, integrated marketing communication provides a framework to understand tactics that academic administrators might utilize to influence perception of their schools brand promise.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter explains the research methodology and identifies specific research questions. Participants, data collection, and analysis are also discussed. Qualitative design was chosen for this study as it provides an effective framework for research that has not been studied before. Rather than prefigured quantitative survey methods, qualitative research is more emergent as the research process unfolds (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through coding, broad themes emerge and new ideas may form into new and unique understandings of activities, policies, and people. The researcher is more involved with the subjects and positionality is often an advantage in gaining entry to a closed community that otherwise might be challenging to study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Qualitative methods are useful to better understand social situations, events, roles, groups, and interactions (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987).

However, when using qualitative methods, the researcher must be careful that personal viewpoints don't negatively influence the quality of the findings (Mertens, 2003). Since the personal-self and the research-self may overlap, honesty and openness during the research process and in interpreting findings is important (Mertens, 2003).

Analysis of interviews included techniques from Miles & Huberman (1994)

- Coding the transcripts from recorded interviews

- Identifying similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences
- Ascertaining a set of generalizations that result from consistencies in the data
- Applying the generalizations to grounded theory selected for the study

The methodology included content analysis of 10 school web-sites and 20 interviews including 10 deans and 10 associate deans. Qualitative methods are selected for this study because this method is best for determining “why” (Creswell, 1998) including how people act and process information. Finally, the data was be reduced through transcripts, summaries, coding, and looking for clusters in themes.

Research Questions

As demonstrated in the literature review, many have studied ranking rubrics and the effects of rankings (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Dichev, 1999; Martins, 2005; Shields, 2007; Jin & Walley, 2007), but there remains a gap in the literature in understanding the influences on perception of quality in undergraduate business programs relative to the peer based ranking methodology. Even though this particular ranking rubric is often discounted the reality is that the outcome matters to stakeholders. This study provides insight into how academic administrators are making decisions about peer schools and how they might be

strategically trying to influence their schools' brands in the eyes of others. While this topic is narrow, practices in business education impact over 673 business schools in the U.S. (AACSB, 2010). The research questions provided a place to start to help better understand the people and practices that shape undergraduate business programs. Public relations, understanding brand perceptions and peer evaluation impacts many areas of higher education within the context of national rankings and in the mind of consumers. It is becoming common for universities, colleges and departments to invest in integrated marketing communication. This might include announcing new faculty in a brochure mailed to peers or branding new programs, departments, or colleges with a donor's name. Since higher education is investing in branding strategies to create differentiation and value, learning about what makes a difference in the mind of peers will inform many areas of higher education. The *USNWR* rankings of undergraduate programs set the background for many of the questions.

1. How do administrators define quality in their programs and in the programs of peer schools?
2. How and what influences administrators when evaluating reputation of peer schools? (research theories: professionalism, institutional theory, reputation/prestige and symbolic interactionism)

3. What methods are administrators utilizing to influence brand perception with their stakeholders and educational peers? Are they effective? (research theories: integrated marketing communication; professionalism, institutional theory, and symbolic interactionism)
4. How are competitors treated differently when evaluating academic reputation? (research theories: resource dependency, academic capitalism)

The first question sets a benchmark in understanding how administrators define quality using Pascarella's excellence framework (2001) as a guide. The second question, pertaining to influence and perception is grounded in professionalism (Gouldner, 1957), institutional theory (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) because these theories explain how decision makers possess values, morals, and ethics that become principles that influence decisions. Professionalism, a framework by Alvin Gouldner, also helps us better understand commitment to professional skills and values (1958). Strategic marketing communication and branding theory provide the theoretical framework for the questions pertaining to methods of influence. Finally, the questions about the importance of the rankings and determining the strategic competition inherent in the rankings are grounded in academic capitalism and resource dependency. Because schools compete for potential donors, students, faculty, and corporations that might hire

their graduates there may be strategic opportunities to “game” the rankings for better positioning.

Document Analysis

To better understand how schools market and reflect on undergraduate business program rankings, a secondary data collection strategy was included to review the web content for all of the schools studied. According to an article on “How to Evaluate a Business School” the author begins with the advice to “read everything you can” and instructs prospective students to start obtaining information by visiting the school’s website (<http://businessmajors.about.com/od/choosingaschool/ht/EvaluateSchool.htm>, August 3, 2010). The important information that can be found on the website, according to the author includes detailed information about the students at the school, faculty, curriculum and other key findings to help a student make informed decisions (Schweitzer, <http://businessmajors.about.com>). A recent Noel-Levitz survey of 1,000 college-bound seniors heeded this kind of advice as they reported the importance of a high quality web site in their college research. Students reported valuing web content, willingness to read a “great deal”, and if a school’s web site content did not match their expectations, they considering dropping that college from their prospective list (Levitz, N , 2010). The web site, as the most accessible form of public relations, provides a road map helping

prospective consumers get from their need for an educational product to their purchase/investment or enrollment (Levine, 2003).

Given the importance of a web site for recruitment information and communicating the culture of a business school to prospective students, this became a critical first look at the business schools in the study. The goal of the document analysis was to identify congruence and incongruence with information from the interviews relative to the importance of rankings. Also, how schools portrayed academic quality while attempting to differentiate themselves from others. Document analysis is an effective way to observe the values and beliefs of participants in an unobtrusive way (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Web site analysis is important in providing insights into how the people that wrote the materials, features, text, etc. perceive their world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) and create meaning in their organization (Gepart, 1988). This is why subject-produced materials are commonly used to compliment qualitative interview based studies. Increasingly, colleges hire marketing communication professionals or consultants to produce their web sites. However, most school administrators review or approve the content (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to the Noel Levitz report (2009) students begin their school search online by Googling the name of the schools. I did this as well. I then went to the business school's main page, looked at the undergraduate program's pages and put rankings into the search engine. This helped me better understand the positioning of rankings on their

pages and generally what prospective students might see as they scrolled through a school's web pages.

Interview Methodology

Interviews were used to better understand the 10 business schools examined through the lens of 20 business school leaders (10 deans and 10 associate deans). Open ended interviews helped elicit insight into the decisions and strategies of the administrators relative to completing the ranking instrument and developing marketing strategies for their schools. According to the editors of the USNWR, the undergraduate business ranking survey is sent to two administrators per AACSB accredited business schools. While the survey itself states that the dean and a senior faculty member are surveyed, actual correspondence with USNWR editors clarifies this as usually the dean and the associate dean of the undergraduate program.

The interviews were semi-structured to allow a free flowing discussion to better understand processes that lead to specific outcomes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is known as "local causality" (Seidman, 1991). Because the interviewer has professional knowledge of the people and process of undergraduate business education, interviews will be meaningful and significant in answering the research questions. Interviews will help explore issues and

perceptions while involving the participants in developing the data, and allowing open ended discussions to embrace emergent research. According to Seidman (1991) interviewees' thoughts become embodied in their words. The interviews will provide insight into processes, activities and events (Creswell, 2003).

Sample

It is assumed based on market behaviors that schools close to significant ranking benchmarks (top 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, etc) have a significant interest in "moving up in the rankings". Consequently, the schools within the *USNWR* top 7-50 were selected as it is assumed these schools have an interest in moving into the next band of ranking and may be more actively involved in the hunt for improved rankings. For example, aspiring to "top 5" or breaking into the "top 10" would be a significant ranking improvement for many of these schools and would produce great stakeholder enthusiasm. Schools already in the top 10 have "made it" and may not have to work as hard to achieve brand attention. The sample was one of convenience in which the researcher had contacts at most of the schools identified through a national organization. This was a particular advantage because many of the schools that are invited to attend the National Undergraduate Business School Symposium have top reputations, yet don't

often compete for the same students, so they were generous when sharing best practices.

Many business school administrators are interested in brand perceptions and peer influence. Both deans and associate deans were selected because both are targeted to complete the USNWR survey. The deans had more of a strategic perspective, while the associate dean was likely to provide more tactical insight into the reality of undergraduate business education. The public business schools were selected for their geographical diversity and their membership in all of the largest athletic conferences. The significance of the athletic conference could help the researcher identify common competitors, peer groups, and social networks. “Deans” (one interim, one senior associate dean and one retired dean, with seven seated deans) and “associate deans” (some program directors all responsible for management of the undergraduate program) from seven public schools and three private schools comprised the interview sample. In order to ensure open and honest responses, the names of the schools and the administrators are confidential in the summary of the research.

Based on existing relationships the researcher has with assistant and associate deans that participate in the National Undergraduate Business Symposium, an invitation only organization of highly ranked business schools, membership in this otherwise closed group served as an advantage. The professionalization of

business education encourages networking and interaction with other business schools as common practice. It is common for schools to select aspirational peers and benchmark best practices. Often peers are sought for insight and advice and might serve on internal program reviews or accreditation visits. Accreditation visits are formalized through the AACSB and include at least one peer school dean. Consequently, deans active in AACSB have significant insight into peer programs.

Overview of Subjects

The contestants and judges in the US News ranking/ “beauty contest” that participated in this study included institutions and individuals selected based on both a convenience sample in which I had access to contacts from a national organization (National Undergraduate Business School Symposium, NUBS), regional diversity of the schools, public and private institutions, and all but one have top 50 rankings.

The research subjects will be referenced by fictitious school names for the purpose of anonymity.

Table 6: Pseudonyms of Study Universities

Pseudonym	Support	Region	Classification
Impress School of Mgmt	Public	Big 10	AAU Research Extensive
Mascot School of Mgmt	Public	ACC	AAU Research Extensive
Millionaire School of Mgmt	Public	Big 10	AAU Research Extensive

Moonlight School of Mgmt	Public	Big 10	AAU Research Extensive
Fortune School of Mgmt	Public	Big East	AAU Research Extensive
Windfall School of Mgmt	Public	Pac 10	AAU Research Extensive
Engage School of Mgmt	Private	South	AAU Research Extensive
Bliss School of Mgmt	Private	NE 10 Conference	BUS
Icon School of Mgmt	Public	Big 10	AAU Research Extensive
Bright School of Mgmt	Private	Western	Research University

All but two of the sample schools are members of the Association of American Universities (AAU). The AAU includes sixty-two leading public and private research universities in the U.S. and Canada. Schools are invited as members and must be voted in based on a minimum of three-fourths vote of the membership. Schools considered AAU members are known for high quality programs including academic research, scholarship and undergraduate, graduate, and professional education in a number of fields, as well as overall reputation and recognition. These are the kinds of institutions vying for top billing in the national rankings.

The deans and administrators that I interviewed have very diverse backgrounds. Understanding backgrounds can provide clues into social networks and professional frameworks from which people see the world. Both professionalization and institutional theory (Jenks & Reisman, 1968) explain the importance of how people in specific professions come to standardize their norms, beliefs and values often attached to a field or organization. DiMaggio

and Powell (1983) observed similar responses from individuals in the same field as their environments. This causes normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) in which professional norms and standards cause institutions to become homogenous over time. Ruscio (1987) and Levy (1999) found that there are categories of academic professionals. Their research noted that faculty and administrators norm their behavior based on their professions. Each professional category formed a "guild" or normative group. I will watch for influence in answers based on background, numbers of schools attended or employed, academic contacts, professional contacts, research background, professional associations, etc. Because some of the demographic characteristics could jeopardize the anonymity of the participants I will provide an overview of background characteristics of the participants. The "deans" I interviewed have worked in an average of three business schools. Several were employed in six different schools. A number of the subjects had been deans at more than one school. Almost all reported active involvement with AACSB. Their PhD's included economics, organizational behavior, marketing, finance (3), accounting, operations and math. The "associate deans" degrees included higher education, marketing, business analysis, business administration, law, accounting, sociology and no doctorate. The highest number of schools in which an associate dean was employed included six with the average of two schools as the norm. The

academic backgrounds of the individuals that participated in this study were diverse and represented almost all of the subject areas that can be found in business education. The sample included five women and fifteen men with one participant of African American decent.

Table 7: Profiles of Individuals in the study

Fortune University	Lecturer in leadership and ethics Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BBA: Finance - MBA - PhD: Hed - (3 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No research 	
Fortune University	Dean and Professor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Mgmt - Published in 8 journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has been Dean at 2 schools - Board Beta Gamma Sigma - Active in AACSB
Millionaire University	Dean and Professor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Organizational Behavior - M.OB. - BS: Economics - (all degrees, 2 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Executive compensation - Offshoring - Nonstandard work - Contract work - Employee Leasing - Org. salary and promotion systems - 4 editorial appointments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dean - Assoc. Dean - (2 different schools)
Millionaire University	Associate Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Marketing - MBA: Marketing - BA: Marketing - (same school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing strategy - New Product Dev. - Brand Mgmt 	
Impress University	Undergraduate Program Chair and Professor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Business Analysis - MS - BE: Mechanical Engineering - (3 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technology Mgmt - Decision Support - Supply Chain - Computer Simulations - Enterprise Resource Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 schools
Impress University	Associate Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Marketing - MBA - BEE - (2 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structural models - Alignment of Marketing and sales strategies - Sampling characteristics - Mkt research by managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 different schools
Bright University	Professor of FN (retired dean)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Finance - MS Chemistry - BS Chemistry - (3 schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Banking - Business Ethics - Cash Mgmt - Corporate FN - Corporate Gov. - Personal FN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional appointments in 3 universities
Bright University	Director Undergraduate Program and Professor of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DBA: Bus. Adm - MBA: Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate finance - Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointments in 3 different

	FN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BA: German - (3 schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International business - International corporate finance 	Universities, has been a dean
Icon University	Dean and FN Prof.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: FN - MBA: FN - BS: Business - (2 schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of Mkt structure - Impact of uncertainty on financial decision-making - Macro-finance - Public Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointments in 6 different Universities, number of Federal Reserve appointments
Icon University	Assoc. Dean and Clinical Professor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JD - MA: Business Adm - BBA: Industrial Relations and HR - (same University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collective Bargaining - Conflict Resolution/Negotiation - Disability-based Discrimination - Employment law - Labor arbitration and mediation 	
Bliss University	VP Academic Affairs, Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD - MBA: - BS: Civil Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing - Finance - Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointments in 3 different universities
Bliss University	Assoc. Dean and Mgmt Professor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD Harvard - MA: Eng. Lit - BA: English Lit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mgmt - Strategy - Innovation - Gov & Soc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25 years at this school
Engage University	Dean and Professor of FN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Math - BS - (2 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulatory initiatives - IPOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appointments in 6 different universities, in one a dean
Engage University	Assoc. Dean, faculty position in organization and mgmt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phd: Candidate - MBA: - BSM - (3 different schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurship - Corporate Innovation - Creativity in organizations - Entertainment and Cultural influences - Generation research 	
Windfall University	Dean and Professor of Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Accounting - - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 school
Windfall University	Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Professor of Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: - MS: - BS: - (all from the same university) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial accounting and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 schools
Moonlight University	Asst. Dean for Undergraduate Education and Academic Services, Adjunct Professor in Mgmt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Hed - MA: Philosophy - BA: Phil & Soc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mgmt - Global Mkts - Int. Labor Mgmt - Topics in Mgmt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17 years in one school
Moonlight University	Interim Dean Director of Ciber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PhD: Finance - LL.M - J.D. - M.A.:Math - B.A.: Math - (2 different schools) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interim Dean - Director of Educ - Assoc. Dean - Dean - Chairperson - Program Director

				- (3 different schools)
Mascot University	Dean and Professor of Decision, Operations and Information Technology	- PhD: - MS - MA - BA - (2 different schools)		- Dean - Sr Assoc. Dean - Chair - Founder of Centers - Engineering Prof. - (3 schools) -
Mascot University	Assoc. Dean			- Asst. Dean - Dir Acad affairs - (6 schools)

My sample reflects the national data in terms of most popular academic disciplines for business school deans from AACSB (2010) including accounting, finance, marketing, management and economics. Unfortunately, there is not a similar source for the academic disciplines of middle level managers in business schools (associate deans, directors, etc).

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured and open-ended interviews. While relationships with some of the selected school administrators stem from annual contact at a spring meeting, I conducted telephone interviews in the interest of availability and scheduling. The interview method allowed me to control the line of questioning (Creswell, 2003) and allowed the subject to provide insight that often surprised me. Notes were taken and the audio recording of the conversations were transcribed. Each of the 20 interviews lasted between 40-90 minutes.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation followed the best practices for interview protocols. Audio tapes were transcribed and sent back to the subjects for review and verification. Open and closed codes were applied for every conversation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The coding categories were framed from the research questions and theories behind the questions. As expected, I found emerging themes from the interview responses. These themes provided clues into interpretations when answering the research questions grounded in theory (Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1994). A sample of the type of coding comes from Bogdan and Biklen (1992, PP. 166-172): setting context codes, perspectives held by subjects, subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects, process codes, activity codes, strategy codes and relationship and social structure codes. Qualitative data analysis framework from Miles and Huberman (1984) also provided the explanation for the data analysis:

- Counting: how often is something mentioned or does something occur?
- Noting patterns and themes: repeated explanations, themes, interpersonal relationships and noting pattern statements from more than one interview. This is often used to identify common problems, solutions, and to analyze professional relationships.

- Clustering or grouping: aligning which things go together and which do not; identifying similar patterns or characteristics; sorting responses into meaningful clusters.
- Building a logical chain of evidence: identifying several subjects' emphasis on factors independently and identifying causal links. The process is analytic induction.

Positionality

I have an inside view of undergraduate business education as I've been employed in the field for 13 years with the University of Arizona, Eller College of Management and currently serve as the Associate Dean for the undergraduate program serving 4500 students. As an active participant in the National Undergraduate Business Symposium and the leader of a top 25 ranked program, I have significant contacts and insights into the research questions. I also understand communication within business schools and the fine art of stakeholder communication (students, staff, faculty, employers, parents, philanthropists, corporations, broader university, k-12 educators, deans, etc). At first, because of the competitive nature of business education in competing for talented students and limited financial resources I was concerned that colleagues would be cautious in expressing the reality of undergraduate rankings and

competition to an insider. However, a positive outcome of qualitative research shows that being one of the “insiders within a closed community” is ultimately positive in both understanding the culture and the processes of the community (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995). Consequently, I used my professional contacts as an advantage in my research sample. Being an insider in the undergraduate business program community helped obtain key contacts for both the associate deans and deans of the schools that I studied. Finally, my insight into the challenges of developing, maintaining and communicating program quality helped inform this study.

Trustworthiness

Because the researcher is an insider in the profession of business education, trustworthiness is even more critical. “Building rapport, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitively considering ethical issues” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p 70) was followed at all times. Care was taken, that while mostly familiar with business school terms, the translation of the interviews was accurate, representative and unbiased (Small, 2005). After each interview, the transcript was sent back to each interviewee to make adjustments in the accuracy of the interview, if desired.

A pilot interview study was conducted with one retired vice dean and two retired business school deans, all three individuals currently working in a business school. The pilot study allowed a test of the length, style, sequencing of questions and language used during the interaction (Chadwick, B.A; Bahr, H.M & Albrecht, S.L., 1984). Pilot participants provided feedback about the experience and coached the researcher to expand the open-ended nature of the interview.

Assumptions

Four main assumptions override this study. First, it was assumed that the individuals participating in the study complete the *USNWR* ranking of undergraduate business programs. According to the *USNWR* methodology (2010) deans and senior faculty are asked to complete a ranking survey. The editor specifically reported that the survey is sent to deans and associate deans. Second, it was assumed that deans and associate deans are receiving and seeking information about other schools' programs. Given the pressure to increase in rankings, schools are using marketing and other indirect methods of promoting their school quality. Third, it was assumed that deans and associate deans are implementing activities and initiatives to communicate with their stakeholders, including students, faculty, alumni, philanthropists and others. Finally, the schools selected for the research sample are ranked in positions that seem to have

movement in the ranking and are close to benchmarks that might interest stakeholders (top 10, 15, 20, 30, etc.). There was an assumption that the administrators and the school stakeholders have an interest in seeing these schools climb in the ranking and that as a result they are more committed to marketing and strategies to get their schools noticed.

Limitations

One possible limitation of being an insider in this study group was the trustworthiness of the interviewees' answers, given that they might believe they are giving "trade secrets" to a competitor. However, there are three reasons that this is unlikely to have occurred. First, the pilot study tested this concern. The interviewees found creative ways to express "controversial" topics, yet felt comfortable with honest answers. Second, in business education the nature of the profession makes benchmarking and information sharing a common practice. Finally, the USNWR rankings are so unusual and little is known about decision making relative to the rankings that participants were interested in participated in research that might help inform fortune understanding.

Other study concerns included being able to connect to 20 very busy deans and associate deans. As a result, in some cases the sample was a bit different

than I had anticipated, as I interviewed one interim dean, a senior associate dean, and a retired dean. The other seven deans were seated deans.

Summary

Research seeks to answer specific questions. This chapter outlined the specific research questions and method selected to learn the answers. It is expected that through careful selection of subjects, semi-structured interviews, understanding documents from each subjects' schools (web sites) and consistent procedures from subject to subject that themes and patterns will emerge. It is anticipated that these patterns and themes will correlate with the theoretical foundations selected to ground the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

“The Miss America preliminary competitions and their weighted score values are:
Lifestyle and Fitness in Swimsuit: 15%
Evening Wear: 20%
Talent: 35%
Private Interview: 25%
On-stage Question: 5%”
(www.missamerica.org)

Because of the mysterious nature of the undergraduate business program ranking in *USNWR*, reputation based peer ranking, many business school leaders liken the process to a beauty contest. Unlike the quote from above, in this *USNWR* beauty contest, the mental rubric the deans and associate deans use to derive their scores on the annual ballot is unknown. This chapter provides insight into this subconscious ranking process. Through interviews and web site analysis I'll demonstrate how the participants define quality, how they develop perceptions about the quality (reputation) of other schools and how they actively try to influence the perceptions of others.

Based on the sample of 10 “deans” (8 seated deans, 1 former dean and one academic dean) and 10 “associate deans/directors of undergraduate programs” from AACSB accredited business programs in both public and private universities, the most dominant description for the *USNWR* ranking process was

that of a “beauty pageant”. In many cases, the respondents used the metaphor to describe why the ranking should not be taken seriously.

It is a ballot and beauty contest. I think I fill one out and my dean fills one out, you know it is how you feel in your gut and that is all you can say....simply perception and feeling, Assoc. Dean Fortune.

I will use my most disparaging term: “beauty contest, Assoc. Dean Bright

Media or publication ranking system and criteria, or lack of criteria, and how stakeholders are making decisions based on that, and so they may, through the rankings perceive quality, it may be on the mark or there isn't the depth of understanding, because they're using those ranking in a rather superficial way, Assoc. Dean Millionaire

We want to participate in the rankings in as pure a way and with the most integrity possible. We don't want to support, inject, promote the beauty pageant part of this. And, when you send postcards, that's what you're doing; I think that's what people are doing. “Look at how great we are! Look at how great I look in a bathing suit, Assoc. Dean Moonlight

So if you are talking about a ranking in which I am asked to assess another school, USNWR, etc. I've always hated that ranking. I dismiss it as reputational only. But of course, I fill it out, Assoc. Dean Engage

This is a ridiculous exercise. The rankings game hasIt's decided by magazines and is not a true test of the quality of a school, Dean Millionaire

The ranking is the ranking. It is what it is. Right, again, it's a popularity contest, Dean Impress

If you look at the US News rankings, those are worthless. That's a beauty contest. I can judge the programs of maybe forty schools. Beyond that, I haven't even heard of most of them, Dean Engage

Like the hotdog, if you know how they made it you wouldn't eat one; rankings tend to be like that too, Assoc. Dean Millionaire

The deans acknowledge that the USNWR rankings have little meaning, and yet almost every school in the study proudly displays their rankings on their web sites because stakeholders continue to consider them reputation indicators.

I've established the beauty pageant metaphor, and so, academic quality is the "beauty" in the analogy, reputation is what the administrators consider when completing the peer review ballot, and ethical judging is examined as we learn about the actual ranking process.

Web Site Analysis: Public Image

During the content analysis of the web sites and readily available PR materials found on these web sites (annual reports, videos, brochures, etc) I was able to better understand the personality of each school's brand. Some websites more clearly articulated the school's promise of an experience, defined as "branding" (Marconi, 1993). This section details the findings from external communication which is defined as information available to the public. Often communication personnel develop the actual

PR materials or write the brochures, annual reports, etc. However, in most cases school administrators review and edit the material (Bogdon & Biklen, 2003). These same authors state,

External documents are good indicators of school system's strategies for increasing fiscal support, while in other cases they represent a direct expression of the values of those who administer the schools (pg. 128).

The values of the schools were particularly evident from analyzing their web sites, including the emphasis a school placed on featuring their rankings. The ten schools in my study grouped into four basic categories after examining the front pages, undergraduate program pages, and following links related to rankings on their web sites. The first school is ranking heavy in their PR, while the majority of the schools were proud yet moderate in their ranking placements. Instead of relying heavily on ranking data to demonstrate reputation one school had a "mission-driven" approach with a very consistent brand and message. The final school, as a brave outlier, refused all mention of rankings including omitting links in the internal search referencing national rankings. An important caveat to this research is that web sites are dynamic communication tools. I've noticed that since my original web research, many schools have updated and launched entirely new web pages. Consequently, web research is a snapshot of a particular time and a particular author.

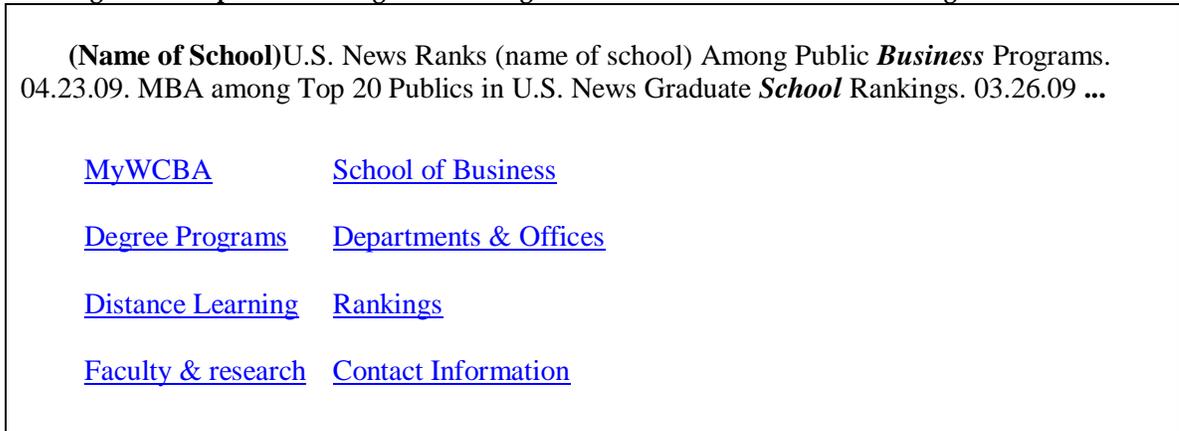
All of the schools selected for this study fall between 10 and 50 in the USNWR ranking. There does not seem to be an obvious trend in their ranking positions and the strategy the school's have implemented for featuring rankings. Fortune, the ranking

proud school is ranked third from the bottom of the schools selected for this study. Icon, the web site beauty winner, noticed for excellence in marketing communication, is ranked second from the bottom of this grouping. The beauty pageant no show, Millionaire, is ranked fourth among the schools in this study. From 2008 to 2009 in the USNWR rankings, one school stayed the same in the ranking, five schools dropped and four schools improved.

Fortune School of Management: Ranking Proud

When first doing research beginning with the Google search engine I found that every school had different links featured in the initial Google search result. The first step of my web based document analysis started off with typing the name of the business school into the Google search engine. Google's search engine finds the school and posts the name, a general description and key links. In one school (Fortune School of Mgmt) I found that the term "rankings" was actually a quick link off of the Google list. Also, the brief description comes up with the ranking result as well. This is the only school in which this occurred.

Figure 3: Sample of the Google Search Engine Link for "Fortune School of Management



I asked web master, Simmons Buntin, from the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona how these links are determined. He informed me that Google sets them based on the most popular links as determined by the Google search results. The only things webmasters control are the page title and the text that appears below, usually a reprint of the description meta tag in the code. SmartWebby (2010) further illustrated this by explaining that Page Rank Technology used by Google is based on link popularity and link quality, there is no paid inclusion into the main results. I illustrate this particular Google example because the fact that ranking shows up for this site in this way demonstrates how many visitors seek out the information. On this school's main page, rankings are a featured button on the toolbar. You can tell that a high volume of visitors have clicked on this tab, because it shows up as a "popular feature" of this site in the Google listing. Remember, the quick tabs in the Google search engine are a result of the amounts of clicks on tabs from the site (Smartwebby, 2010). Only one of the researched schools had the term ranking appear in the Google search

engine in this way. This is primarily due to the architecture of each web site. In this particular school, rankings were a major feature of their public relations strategy.

Fortune School of Management seemed to use rankings as the primary indicator of quality. When clicking the rankings tab there was an interesting introduction,

To fill a niche in the marketplace and ultimately, sell more publications, each ranking takes a slightly different approach to its calculations, focusing on different aspects of business education. And although they are highly visible representations of a program's reputation, media rankings can also be a source of confusion. We suggest prospective students visit the AACSB international web site for help in using the rankings in the most effective and responsible manner.

This disclaimer is almost like a "surgeon general's warning" about rankings. While this school is readily admitting to the confusing nature of the ranking results it is the heaviest user of this method for demonstrating their nationally competitive reputation. Further, the site goes on to list rankings (in highest order) including the following: *USNWR* Undergraduate overall and public, department rankings, Graduate *USNWR*, Princeton Review Student Opinion Honors, Business Week top undergraduate Programs Ranking, Financial Times Global MBA, *USNWR* America's Best Colleges 2009, *USNWR* America's Best Colleges. Featuring a grouping of specific schools and recounting the rankings, illustrates a common practice in communicating ranking data. Rankings are sometimes posted in groupings with reputable peers, for example in the listing of *USNWR* ranking of only public universities. Exclusively counting public universities moves the ranking numbers up and further signals reputation by listing top well-known peers as if to demonstrate "quality is the company you keep".

Most pages of the Fortune School's web site opened with a feature photo or posting of rankings. Under news and events the features included articles about gains in rankings (3 articles). In the 2009 Dean's Report, opening letter, the first sentence reads, "...But with three years remaining, we will adapt our strategy and those unmet needs to position us for competition with the world's best programs". Winning the beauty contest of rankings is a major goal of the school. However, of equal interest is what the school values regarding quality, "...creating new professorships, endowing our School of business, and building a new facility designed with the technological infrastructure and modern workspace needed to best serve our large undergraduate student body." Overall within the 2009 Dean's Report, rankings were rarely mentioned other than in the faculty section. Perhaps the difference between the Dean's Report and the web site is the target audience. The Dean's Report is typically designed primarily for internal stakeholders (faculty) and the corporate board for the school with much of the content relating to successful programs and people. In contrast, the web site, as we learned earlier, is the most important way prospective students get information about a school. Fortune School of Management is likely capitalizing on the rankings as a type of score card to help illustrate to prospective students the overall reputation of their school. Another example of this method was found on the undergraduate portion of the website. The site opened with "a nationally ranked business degree at your finger-tips", and listed the headlines, "News: *USNWR* ranks Fortune University.... And Business Week names Fortune University among top 20 public programs in U.S."

Two places I would have expected to list rankings did not; neither in the “why Fortune University” section off the main page nor the Prospective Student section off the undergraduate business school page. It seems the school isn’t positioning rankings as a way to lure students necessarily, but rather as a story to communicate school success.

Finally, when looking at Fortune University’s main University website the search for rankings took me to a document, “ask Fortune University” with a list of questions including “how many students are in fraternities or sororities” and the 15th question included, “how does Fortune University rank nationwide?” When ranking is put into the Fortune University internal search engine, Fortune University Business School undergraduate ranking is the second link. Under the Office of institutional planning and research the Fortune University rankings are listed for all University programs. There is a table of public AAU universities listed by *USNWR* peer review score. This is another artifact in helping us understand the importance of “the company you keep” and how quality is often associated with being grouped with similar (other public) elite peers. The institutional research web site listing rankings demonstrates that the central administration of Fortune University cares about the rankings of its individual colleges and programs.

The Race for the Crown, but it Seems Everyone is already a Winner

In many of the business schools’ web sites I reviewed, a common theme regarding being considered one of the “nation’s top business schools” emerged from the dean’s messages. While the real rankings would violate anonymity, none of the schools studied

were within the top 10 of the *USNWR* undergraduate business school ranking.

However, the “top” is relative. This section describes seven of the schools’ web sites in this study. While each site is unique, most of these seven schools treated rankings with a balanced approach of listing their rankings, yet providing other evidence of quality and mission.

On Windfall School’s website, there were no rankings on the front page of the college web site, however, Business Week’s interview with the Dean was prominently featured and titled, “Ambitious B-School”. During the interview the dean talks about plans to turn Windfall into the leading public business school in the country, with a focus on “strategic thinking and leadership”. He also shared, “we have a very ambitious goal, our vision is to be the best public business school in America”. Of interest is how this is going to happen. According to the dean in this interview,

Money goes in several areas: great faculty members, faculty support, endowment for student scholarships, improving various programs. How do you differentiate your program? That is the key formula for becoming a great school, hire terrific faculty members, (serve) great students, (teach from a) world class facility.

Financial capital is the primary driver in becoming a leading business school, according to this dean, particularly in hiring top faculty, providing scholarships, and investing in its facilities.

Engage School’s website has the common rankings listed as well, but the Dean describes his school’s competitive advantage, “...a focus on leadership and academics, an intimate learning environment, and a strong commitment to diversity-have gotten us

to where we are, and will take us to the next level to meet the changing demands of our dynamic marketplace.” Engage is one of the three private schools in the study. The difference between the web site videos of the deans from Windfall (public) and Engage (private) is what they said to differentiate their schools. The large public school uses the typical indicators of high quality including faculty, facilities and students. The smaller, elite private school used a different brand description that included learning, diversity, and seemed to indicate that a smaller private school adapts quickly to an ever changing marketplace.

When first entering Impress School’s site three photos welcome the viewer with one titled, “Top-Ranked Programs, We’re among the best”. This link takes readers to the ranking page with this statement,

The (name) School is consistently ranked among the country’s best business schools by publications like Business Week, USNWR, and the Wall Street Journal. While we appreciate the recognition, we keep our focus on providing our students with a world-class education and a wide range of career opportunities-key aspects of the (school).

As this statement demonstrates, the school begins by demonstrating its ranking, but then adds a disclaimer that their “focus” is on students. Their wording, “while we appreciate the recognition, we keep our focus on ... students” suggests that the rankings and serving students are mutually exclusive. In reflecting on their Business Week rankings, they take an approach of featuring ranked areas important in their mission, with specific ranking data relative to: job placement, facilities, overall grade, student survey grade and recruiter survey grade. The focus on career opportunities is an

effective feature because in the CIRP freshman survey (2009), the second most important factor in college selection was the perception that the “college’s graduates get good jobs” (56% of respondents). The front page of the Undergraduate Program does feature the USNWR ranking both overall and public. After clicking on “about us” they lead with,

....undergraduate program continues to attract an increasing number of high performing, highly-qualified students each year. Our consistently strong reputation, impressively high rankings, commitment to excellence in business education and active alumni network that maintains connections to current students have allowed us to attract students from all 50 states of the US and from almost 50 different countries around the world.

The author of this passage is trying to make the case that excellence, rankings, and reputation seem to be linked. We’ll see in other ranking disclaimers that some schools try to offer an alternative approach.

Bliss School highlights its unique mission but proudly adorns its site with the traditional *USNWR* rankings and a host of other accolades linked from “facts” on the front page. Of interest again is the mention of specific aspects of the Business Week rankings (A+ in facilities and services, A in teaching quality, A in job placement). They also mentioned overall ranking and regional ranking. This regional ranking is the first I noticed, however, the school is in a community with a lot of close competitors. The rankings are often conveniently grouped to favor a particular type of institution or communicate a specific message.

Bright School had no mention of rankings on the front page, but on the undergraduate program front page there was a large photo of hands giving high fives

with the headline: “High Five-earn your business degree from a top-notch business school, and set the course for our career. Bright University Jumps to.....” In a Feb. 27, 2009 article, the dean explains the success, “I’m elated to see Bright recognized as one of the very best places to earn a degree in business, I have long felt our secret weapon is our students.” They go on to list the top ranked schools in the 2009 Business Week ranking and say,

It’s an honor to be consistently ranked among the very best. We believe this ranking reflects the quality of our students who are constantly involved in the educational process and for the faculty who push to help them reach their potential.

The interesting point about this passage is that the school explains why they are ranked among the best with their definition of excellence attributed to the faculty and students working together.

Mascot School utilizes the description on the Google search engine link to begin telling the ranking story, “Mascot is a leading business school in research and education, providing top-ranked full-time....” Off the front page, the following features are listed: “What’s new section: Happy Holiday’s ecard, undergrads compete in finals of General Motors Marketing Challenge, School Ranks Among the Top in US for Programs and Research”. On the undergraduate program’s front page the latest news includes: “USNWR ranks Mascot’s Undergraduate Program Among Nation’s Best, Undergraduate IT program Listed Among U.S. Top 10”.

Moonlight School does not list rankings on the front page, but a link to “about the school” goes to a fast facts listing showcasing the ranking data. The school’s annual report focused on change, curriculum review, dean’s search and strengths of the undergraduate program. The similarity in the web sites of the other six schools include the practice of featuring their school as “one of the best in the country”. The rankings were displayed, yet not as prevalent as found on Fortune school’s site. Reputation is a proud feature of all of these schools in the top 50 of USNWR and the word reputation is commonly mentioned in their program descriptions. Unlike Future, these seven schools did not let the rankings speak for themselves, the sites seemed to demonstrate features that explain quality balanced with relative modesty about the rankings.

Icon School of Management: Winner of Website Beauty

Icon School of Management is one of the lower ranked of the schools I studied. However, their website is a masterpiece in brand creation. As we will later learn, this is one of the few schools in which both participants interviewed clearly articulated the mission, goals and tag-line of the school. The elegance is in the simplicity of the message. The brand message begins with the Google search engine in which the tag line under the school reads, “For the third year in a row, Icon students are raising \$50,000 to build a home for a local family through theValley Habitat for Humanity....” On the front page of the website the school’s tag line appears on a large photo with this same theme repeated in stories throughout the website on all of the links. One of the photos

says, “top-ranked programs consistently ranked among the top public programs nationally”. A link labeled college rankings says:

With all the media rankings of business programs that are available to prospective students, it’s hard to make sense of them all. Some value the cost and return on investment, some value the opinions of our peers. As you wade through the sea of rankings, it’s important to note that thecollege of business consistently appears in these rankings.And in the end, while others promise this and that, don’t you want a program with integrity that spends its resources on improving and perfecting our offerings rather than spinning our wheels to please the latest ranking? It’s about doing the right thing, and at theCollege we do just that...That’s the (tagline).

This quote explains the frustration felt by many of the deans, with the belief that resources should be spent on the students and developing a quality experience, not on creating reputational capital with other deans. However, few readings would really understand this quote unless they understood the USNWR ranking process. Icon School of Management goes on to explain their philosophy:

We’re about integrity-because people are only as good as their word. We’re about innovation and understanding the underpinnings of new products, processes, and businesses. And we’re about impact, the kind an Icon experience has on our students so that they are prepared to change the world after graduation.....by basing its business education on integrity, innovation, and impact.

This is an example of trying to explain the elements of a reputation rather than simply posting a ranking. The front page of the undergraduate program includes the bold headlines, “highly regarded and affordable, resources of a big ten research institution”. In the “Why Icon” link, the headlines read, “The Network, The Numbers (employment and ranking), The Faculty, The Innovation, The Unexpected Advantages”. However, Icon University’s web site seems to highly value the rankings as its strategic

plan includes an aspiration to be among the Top 10 public universities in the country and goes on to list all of the *USNWR* top program rankings.

This website is featured as one of the most effective because it played up the unique characteristics of the school and had a consistent look, while conveying the essence of the student experience at the school. The tagline, photos and content spotlighted the student experience and allowed the features of the school to tell the story, rather than simply relying on a magazine's ranking to demonstrate quality.

The first school I featured, Fortune, utilized rankings to tell its story about reputation and quality. Rankings were simply found everywhere, from the search engine to placement on almost every page. In contrast, the majority of the schools in the study had more of a balanced approach in which rankings were easily found, but were cautiously placed as evidence, not the main feature of their quality programs. The third school (Icon) was selected as an outstanding example of integrated marketing communication. The web site communicated quality from the content better than the others. The school selected a tagline and integrated the message throughout the site to illustrate student experiences, and demonstrate quality in a very humble and unique way.

All of the schools selected for this study fall between 10 and 50 in the *USNWR* ranking. Fortune, our "ranking proud" school is ranked third from the bottom of the schools selected for this study. Icon, the "on-stage interview" winner, noticed for excellence in marketing communication, is ranked second from the bottom of this

grouping. While Icon can be very proud of a top 50 performance, they have adopted a strategy to showcase their “inner beauty”. In contrast, Fortune seems to be chasing the rankings in a more aggressive fashion.

Millionaire School of Management: Beauty Pageant “no show”

One of the top ranked schools in the study, Millionaire School of Management, stands out in the crowd for not participating in the ranking “madness”. The USNWR ranking for this school fell three spots from 2008-2009. In the Business Week ranking the school also declined in the ranking. Because rankings could not be found on their business school’s web pages, including conspicuously being omitted from their internal search engine links, it became rather obvious that this was a purposeful strategy. Consequently, I asked the associate dean about the lack of rankings. He wrote, “Interesting that you noted the absence of rankings. And yes, this is an intentional decision on our part. We want to stress our values and opportunities here and not play the rankings game. If we could, I think most of us here wouldn’t even cooperate with mushrooming rankings industry.” The message this school is sending to the public is that by not participating in rankings, they can instead concentrate on things that matter to the school as if educational excellence and rankings are mutually exclusive, similar to the message we found imbedded in the dean’s comments from Impress. The frustration with the drop in rankings and desire to focus on “values and opportunities” rather than rankings may be the reason for the dean’s decision to “quit the pageant.” Instead, Millionaire University takes a mission driven approach to all content on their web site

including the dean's communication, videos, and individual pages. An illustration of quality is featured in the Dean's run down of accomplishments in the 2009 Annual Report:

And, importantly, rather than achieving such momentum via a few isolated incidences; we did so in a broad number of ways. In our Undergraduate Program we experienced marked increased in both applications and enrollment. We introduced a new curriculum that includes international requirements. We experienced continued improvement in the quality of our incoming freshmen. And we completed our first year in our(new undergraduate building).....At the heart of our school is thefaculty. And it is on this topic that we have given, and will continue to give, our closest attention towards attracting and retaining the world's best and brightest.

Millionaire School of Management seemed to have a banner year with improved student interest and quality, updated curriculum, and opening a new building. All of these quality indicators have been mentioned throughout other web sites and quotes from deans as the most important indicators of quality. However, even with these advances Millionaire fell in both *USNWR* and *Business Week*. No wonder the administrators seem to have thrown up their hands and are refusing to acknowledge the rankings.

I did find one mention of rankings in the annual report, "As a part of a public research university, theschool is committed to advancing the University's goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world." Again, the central university seems to greatly value rankings. This school's attention to their brand based on "quality of experience" provides the perfect transition into the interview analysis portion of this study. Why didn't their ranking increase after such a banner

year, and opening a new building? It is “behind the curtain” of this beauty pageant that we really learn about the culture of business schools and the understanding of perceptions of quality that create reputation. We will learn more from both the judges’ and contestants’ point of view.

In summary, we know from Monk and Ehrenberg’s research on *USNWR* rankings (1999) that schools with a less favorable rank are less selective, have a smaller number of applicants matriculate and rely more heavily on financial packages to attract students. We also know from the Noel Levits, E-expectations Report (2009) that prospective students’ value and read school web sites to the extent that a poorly designed site could turn students away all together. According to the CIRP survey of incoming freshman (2009), 63.6% said a school’s academic reputation is the most important decision factor for them when they selected their college. This information suggests that college rankings might be used to confirm a student’s perception of academic quality, serving to help reinforce a student’s choice (Pryor, et. Al., 2010). The schools in this study seem to understand the power of the *USNWR* ranking and have designed their sites accordingly with only a few employing unique strategies. Nine of the 10 schools in the study capitalized on their *USNWR* ranking in some way on their web site as a signal of their reputation. Another common articulation of reputation was the practice of grouping the school’s rankings by similar peer sets including AAU peer schools, or other public

business schools as if to further signal reputation as being in an elite set of well known schools.

*How Academic Quality/ "Beauty" is Defined
in an Undergraduate Business Program*

"Beauty (noun): The qualities that give pleasure to the senses, or an outstanding example of its kind; "his roses were beauties", "when I make a mistake it's a beaut."
(Wordnet 1.7.1).

This section helps explain how the 20 participants define academic quality in their own programs and in others. Within the top 50 *USNWR* ranked undergraduate business programs, the top 10 are commonly considered the most elite and seem to hold their top 10 positions annually. The top 50 move one or two spots up and down regularly to make the contest exciting. Staying in the bands of top 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 is considered newsworthy and does appear on web sites. It is also common to see the results grouped by region, other AAU Universities, public schools, etc. There seems to be an advantage in displaying rankings in such a way as to include recognizable peers and by streamlining the set into fewer schools so the ranking of the listed schools is higher. An example of this is, "we're top 18 public, but 25 overall".

All of the schools represented in this sample are AACSB accredited schools. According to the AACSB web site, in an article titled "What do Today's Business Students Want From Your School"; the results for a quality student experience include: "professors with engaging personalities, research, practical work experience, smart class-

mates, challenging courses, difficult exams and “the most important goal of landing a job they can be proud of” (AACSB, Promoting Your Accreditation 2010, found in www.aacsb.edu/accreditation).

According to Pascarella (2001) the most common methods of measuring excellence include: reputation ranking; student and alumni outcomes; measuring effective processes and practices including teaching quality, peer and faculty, student engagement and intensity of academic experience. This section explores how our business school leaders in top ranked programs describe academic quality or beauty in this metaphor.

I was surprised that throughout my interviews the definition of academic quality varied in every conversation. However, when looking at the respondents comments in total they did touch upon the topics the literature predicted (Pascarella, 2001). The deans and associate deans differed in their definitions of quality in an undergraduate program. This is not surprising given the big picture view of the dean and the more operational perspective of the associate dean.

Quality and Categories of Beauty from Deans

The deans who participated in this study have big jobs. On average they manage a mean operating budget of \$16 million and a mean endowment of \$24 million (AACSB, 2010). The organization of a business school is complex and deans are often referred to as CEOs. Today’s business school usually includes a PhD program, MBA program, specialized masters programs, executive

education and an undergraduate program. Deans often trust the operations of their programs to associate deans while they concentrate on building a strong and enduring culture, funding a new building or developing significant endowments (Klimoski, 2007).

In total, the deans mentioned the categories that Pascarella (2001) identified including academic rigor, quality of students, reputation, student engagement and measuring effective practices in teaching, and faculty talent. The private school deans, in particular emphasized rigorous classes and relevance of the curriculum, perhaps because they have higher tuition and have to demonstrate value in a more competitive market place. The dean of Bliss shared his definitions of quality, “a student’s early career performance” and even more importantly “being able to continue to learn and develop as their career accelerates”. The dean of Engage referenced his background in math and science as he spoke about rigor in his reference to quality programs. He also mentioned that he believes very strongly in challenge and developing critical thinking skills. The dean of Impress went on to emphasize that students not only have to provide analysis, but they have to communicate outcomes. To distinguish themselves, he believes students must work in teams, and become involved in experiential learning to practice and deliver innovation and quality. These quotes

reinforce Pascarella's (2001) research defining academic quality in student outcomes, curricular rigor, and relevance.

Student quality can be measured in many ways. Standardized test scores, ACT or SAT, is an important indicator of program quality for many deans. Dean of Fortune said, "In some sense, you can invest in programs, but you have less control on the outcomes than you do if you focus on very high quality students." This same dean, commented that he compares his students' SAT scores to those from other schools and uses that comparison to measure the quality of his programs. Another dean, from Mascot business school had an interesting perspective that talented students challenge faculty and make the faculty better, which in turn creates a high quality program. The Dean of Bright, summarized student quality in other institutions by, "I see whether these students are really going places." It is clear that deans are watching other programs. The areas that can be measured, like national test scores and placement results, are a common definition of quality. In an ironic admission, the dean of Fortune mentioned "program control" and how important high quality students are to the success of his program. This makes one wonder how transformational he believes his curriculum really is. He seems to be saying the quality of input is the quality of output regardless of what happens as a result of the experience in the school.

This is an interesting contrast from the private schools' efforts to demonstrate the value of their unique curriculum and student experience.

In alignment with Pascarella's findings (2001) about reputation as an indicator of quality, the use of the word distinction was favored by deans over the word unique in describing quality. Several deans strongly vented about the use of the word unique, as is commonly used in marketing literature. They felt little is unique in the business school industry because of AACSB and the open sharing of ideas and programs. However, the strategy of distinction is something that deans think about as they work to position their schools in the business school market and try to leave a legacy. The dean of Bliss, a school in a very crowded regional market commented,

Let's take our cousin down the road; everyone knows that (school name) is about entrepreneurship....It's not unique by a long shot.... (School name) has been very good in that everyone knows it's about entrepreneurship. It is a clear distinguishing characteristic. It can come from early movement, it can come from an appropriate degree of focus, and it could very definitely come from – and the hardest thing of all is – institutions deciding how, at the time, they're going to concentrate their resource.

Strategy and distinction are on the minds of deans as they work to decide how to position their resources. The deans are often pulled in many different directions, selecting one area to determine the school's reputation is a very difficult decision and many are pulled by the faculty to avoid this tactic.

Student engagement and services for students was another category of quality. Deans mentioned the infrastructure that supports the curriculum including academic advising, internship programs, career services and according to Dean of Millionaire, “the extracurricular set of activities how they are organized, supported, the breadth and depth in those that are active student engagements.” This same dean also included technology, infrastructure and the learning environment of the building. The dean of Windfall mentioned unique programs of his school that might encourage student engagement including the global business center, center for innovation, retail center and other unique programs. The deans have mentioned areas that may be seen as complimentary to the basic majors in a business school. Yet, these innovative or complimentary elements can come to define quality in a business school. In some ways, the administrators are describing the icing on the cake, or even the decorations, as their perception of quality in a school seems to assume a basic academic competency with special features providing differentiation. No deans commented that quality is determined solely by the quality of the basic business majors, departments or programs.

In the spirit of the beauty pageant, where we save the best for last, the most popular answer about the definition of academic quality, from deans interviewed is... faculty quality and research. Overwhelmingly, the most responses defining

academic quality stemmed from the quality of faculty which then related to research. This is not surprising considering that 8 out of the 10 schools in the sample are AAU research institutions. The Dean of Bright simply stated his thinking, “my first reaction was faculty, but then there’s a lot more to it.” The Dean of Millionaire elaborated with faculty and research as a “pre-condition for having a rigorous, robust curriculum”. The following quote explains the importance of a research faculty,

You’re asking me how do you define quality for the undergraduate business education and research affects for the most part undergraduates indirectly through the classroom. (Research) affects that(quality) indirectly through school reputation but that’s just a mirror of quality. There are a very small number of undergraduates engaged in research, but they’re going to see impact of research indirectly, Dean Millionaire

This quote questions the closely linked concept of quality and reputation. The reputation derived from a high quality research faculty may not be directly experienced by undergraduates. As this dean points out, in an undergraduate program, there is often an indirect benefit of being enrolled in a research intensive business school. There is an irony about quality and research for students in an undergraduate program. Because undergraduates are positioning themselves for the job market, few become involved in their faculty members’ research. Unfortunately, research active faculty may have lower teaching loads and may teach fewer undergraduate courses. This means that fewer

undergraduates are likely to be exposed to these high quality faculty members and may learn from a greater number of adjuncts or lecturers. However, as the dean points out, the quality of the school is dependent on the reputation of the research faculty.

One finding was the relative infrequency of teaching as a top response when defining academic quality. The most popular responses included quality of faculty, students, and the overall experience. One of the respondents, the most outspoken about teaching is from one of the non-AAU universities. However, even in the context of talking about teaching, the quality of the faculty at this school, is defined by their educational background and their research record. Quality teaching seemed to be a differentiator for this school as the dean would have led us to believe that in many of the research schools in which he had been employed, teaching quality had little value. Dean of Bright, said:

I guess one of the best ways to recognize quality is to recognize the quality of the faculty you have, and so we have really tried to bring in people that went to really good institutions and are very intelligent people, but are also excellent teachers. And we stress teaching a lot at (school name), and while we also stress research, I think, when push comes to shove, teaching is kind of paramount. We've actually had people we've turned away. Their research factor has been excellent, but they're not good teachers, so they don't stay. And I think that's different than many other of the top schools in the country.

Another way to interpret this quote is that "really good institutions" are best served by graduating PhD students that will go on spread the PhD granting

institution's academic reputation. Several deans did mention the importance of a large PhD program to their school's reputation. Unfortunately, quality teaching was simply not what came to the mind of the majority of the subjects in this study when asked about quality. Rather, there seemed to be an inference that hiring quality faculty and supporting quality research would naturally make for excellent teachers. Because processes are subjective and teaching quality is difficult to measure and market, this is not an indicator that is widely understood.

In summary, the deans agreed that input (high quality students and faculty), throughput (high quality curriculum, student engagement, support systems, experiential education) and output (career placement and progression) describe academic quality. The input includes the quality of the students, the output is often the placement and feedback of the employers and the throughput, including the curriculum, learning, engagement, and support systems are more difficult to assess. This may be why the quality of teaching or learning was rarely mentioned by the subjects. The transformational nature of someone else's program is hard to quantify and difficult to market. This is often one of the complaints in national rankings, because the throughput is rarely measured or understood. The quantifiable measures seem to dominate in the minds of the deans interviewed.

Quality and Categories of Beauty from Associate Deans

The associate deans are often closer to the students than the deans and therefore, they answered with more understanding of the student experience. They did mention most of the same topics as the deans with the student experience as the most common emphasis area. This occurred in particular from the associate deans that are not research active. Those that have previously been research faculty tended to answer more similarly to the deans. In some cases, when the associate deans had a very long tenure in working with their undergraduate programs, even those with a research background embraced more of the student experience as an indicator of quality:

Broadly, I think of quality as all encompassing in terms of everything we do from marketing to admissions all the way through graduation and placements. If you mean by academic quality the classroom instructional piece of it, one piece of much bigger picture of what quality is all about, Associate Dean Millionaire.

Many associate deans meet prospective students and parents and are the sales people of their programs. As a result, the entire student experience becomes an important indicator of quality because they know that the teaching quality is often a mixed bag with great variability in quality from semester to semester. In many cases, it is the student experience that differs from one school to another as text books and the basic curriculum of business program may look very similar across institutions.

In summary, the deans and associate deans agreed with Pascarella 's 2001 research in which he found that some of the most common methods of measuring excellence include reputation and ranking; student and alumni outcomes; or measuring effective processes and practices. He defined effective processes and practices as teaching, interaction with faculty and peers, student affairs programming, intensity of the academic experience and student engagement. For business school deans, the quality of faculty is paramount in their thinking because they believe outstanding schools are a result of outstanding faculty creating and delivering top curriculum, excellent research, and a reputation that mirrors this quality. In contrast, the associate deans most often consider the quality of the student experience, because it is often the differentiator of one undergraduate program from another. The deans emphasized inputs (faculty and students) because they are easiest to measure and understand. The associate deans emphasized the student experience or throughputs. The finding here, is the difference in definition of quality between the deans and the associate deans. When the *USNWR* undergraduate ballot is filled out by a dean and an associate dean, the result can be very different, yet complimentary, as both are considering quality from different perspectives.

How Perceptions about Reputation are Developed

“The image of Miss America, with her small-town persona, youth and energy, was becoming enshrined in the nation’s imagination as America’s Ideal Woman”
(Miss America.org)

Image is defined as the perception that external stakeholders form about an organization and reputation is the end result of many aggregated perceptions (Fobrun & van Riel, 1997). Stakeholders use their perceptions to form collective judgments based on an organization’s performance over time in areas of significance to the observer (Barnett, 2006). This section summarizes the diversity of how collective perceptions are formed by deans and associate deans about undergraduate business programs. The themes that emerged to influence the administrators of the *USNWR* peer review included faculty and research, external influences, brand characteristics, student focused influences, professional and AACSB influences and social networks.

Faculty Influence

The faculty and their research scored highest in the judges’ definition of academic quality in the previous section. This section helps us understand how collective perceptions are formed about faculty quality.

Administrators shared that faculty quality is one of the most important inputs in determining academic reputation and perceptions about faculty quality come

from many sources. New faculty members are often prominently announced to other deans with post cards or other creative marketing. This communication approach is common, however, the practice can backfire on a school if their new recruits aren't attractive to others. The dean of Mascot commented that a school sent him promotional information about being number one, and yet when he examined the new faculty announcement he realized he would not have hired any of the individuals on the list based on their research excellence. He also commented that other schools in his peer set probably wouldn't have hired them either. As deans are intimately involved in the recruiting process, they meet with new faculty recruits and develop perceptions about the institutions from which top candidates graduate and about peer schools competing for the same new faculty. On the other end of the spectrum, the administrators form perceptions about schools when faculty leave abruptly or when there is mass exodus. When high quality faculty members are involved in seeking new employment they are actively talking about their previous institution and the factors that caused them to leave. The dean of Millionaire summarizes faculty movement, "credible information is either faculty who they hired or who's left." The deans that loose excellent colleagues watch where they go, "we just lost our very, very best professor to (school) and I'm broken hearted," shared associate dean Mascot.

Over time a school's ability to attract and retain top faculty increases their reputation as summarized by associate dean, Engage:

See a big name in your field moving from (school x) to (school y) you wonder 'wow' what is going on here? You feel like they are hiring four or five faculty, that slowly their reputation is going up.

Another aspect of faculty movement that affects a school's reputation is the experience the new faculty members bring from their previous program. The "leakage of practices across schools as you hire faculty that were doctoral students at different places brings new ideas," believes dean, Icon. When faculty mention innovative practices from other institutions with which they have experience, colleagues notice, "anytime anyone mentions, whether the faculty or the program or the initiative of another institution, I literally jot it down and try to pay attention to it," associate dean, Moonlight. Some of the most powerful perceptions are acquired as deans compete with peers in the hiring process. Administrators realize that it takes resources and prestigious faculty members to attract talented new recruits to a department. The dean of Engage explains this process as a "hierarchy" in which he knows which schools he can compete with equally for new faculty. He shared that faculty are attracted to institutions in which a top faculty member creates a perception of quality and attracts others. Faculty are attracted by both other individuals and the overall quality of the school.

In general, there were little surprises about how participants came to know the quality of another school's faculty. The administrators pointed to personal interaction as most important regarding perceptions of faculty quality. This was illustrated through the participants' statements about "knowing and trusting" people they know professionally. Other more typical examples included research in major journals, information from review boards, conferences, opinions in news articles, participating on national committees within their disciplines, and applicability of research to the business profession. One dean commented that knowledge of text book authors on a faculty contributes to the overall sense of talent, but not as much as the role research plays in reputation. The point was also made that quality of the faculty is easy to judge, but quality of teaching is very difficult to know. In fact, quality of teaching was never mentioned out of all of the lists of influences over the course of the 20 interviews.

External Influences

In a professional community with standards and national meetings administrators have many ways of obtaining information from and about their peers. External information seems to originate from national magazines, benchmarking, what employers share, previous work experience, previous education experience, sport team reputations, and what students say about other business schools.

In an interesting twist Business Week, both the magazine and the new rankings have a significant impact on perceptions of quality and reputation which carries over into the *USNWR* rankings. The associate dean of Windfall shared that “the single best source (of information) for me was Business Week.” Other participants mentioned carefully deconstructing the Business Week rankings as they are more quantitative in nature to develop insights into how others are at the top of the ranking. This analysis of the Business Week inputs yields insight into specific education models of other peer institutions.

According to the associate dean of Fortune, he looked for schools that were ahead of his school’s ranking and set out to find what the peer school “large research one public” was doing to earn a better score on that specific measure. He believes that learning from successful peers is a strategic advantage. He shared that he visited schools that earned an A+ in placement in the Business Week survey to find out what they were doing right. This is an interesting finding regarding the influence of the new Business Week rankings on the perception of an institution’s reputation. Because of Business Week’s methodology more diverse schools are listed in the top 50 including a higher proportion of smaller and private business schools. Because Business Week rankings are studied carefully, the diversity of schools in the Business Week ranking results may increase their exposure to administrators that otherwise

knew nothing of the quality of these schools outside their traditional USNWR set. It will be interesting to watch if Business Week rankings will influence the USNWR peer rankings over time as new schools become recognized in an elite set. Some deans shared that the Business Week data and what they know of certain schools do not “match”, suggesting dishonesty in the reporting of data. In this case, the published data and scores of peers in the Business Week rankings can negatively affect the reputation of a school if deans believe the ranking was earned in an unethical manner. Most of the time when deans were questioning ranking outcomes, they were referring to the Business Week ranking table.

A number of administrators surveyed talked about the importance of benchmarking. Almost everyone gave examples of surveys, involvement on list serves, peer school campus visits and school affinity group meetings as sources that shaped perceptions of quality in a program. The benchmarking and peer interaction most commonly included schools with similar size and missions. The dean of Bliss shared that most benchmarking is done with other public large or state universities because the resources of these institutions are similar. Marketing was also mentioned as a way perceptions of quality are created.

The work, I’ve done in getting to know institutions through accreditation, through attending a conference, through speaking with deans, trying to read through the marketing that we all have when we produce our magazines that we mail to each other, dean Bliss.

The very top schools are almost ignored in terms of benchmarking because of the belief that the resources are so significant others can't replicate the academic model. In some ways, this continues the halo effect, in which the perception of quality may be more than the actual proof of quality. Few of the administrators mentioned active benchmarking of the top schools.

Corporate employers are also very important in spreading perceptions about a school's reputation. Most business schools have corporate boards and work closely with recruiters to develop strategic relationships. The dean of Bliss shared that employers often comment on best practices from other schools and actively compare the quality of preparation of students from different business schools.

The other thing we would get would be feedback from other recruiters with whom we compete, and so we get people saying, 'your students are not as good as students from that school because they don't have this kind of background,' dean Bright.

The recruiters seem to be a major source of both creating perceptions of quality when they make hiring decisions and by sharing perceptions of quality when they sit on advisory boards and give feedback to school administrators.

Academic administrators, especially deans averaged employment in from three to six schools. The associate deans averaged employment in from two-six different schools. This first hand interaction with many schools is an obvious

source of social network development and reputational capital for the administrators as they are known by faculty at different schools. However, most of the previous employment comments were not positive. The administrators had specific stories about why they left previous schools. Examples included everything from ethical dilemmas, personality conflicts and simply moving to a more prestigious university and program. Consequently, when people leave an institution they carry a perception about how they were treated there. What the administrators do seem to fondly regard from previous experience is where they went to school. Positive relationships and memories are developed at the school's in which previous degrees were earned. The dean of Icon opened his conversation sharing his experience at his undergraduate institution. He commented that he compares other schools' undergraduate programs with his own undergraduate experience. In some cases, sons and daughters of deans were also mentioned as a way deans ascertain information about quality in other schools.

The *USNWR* ballot lists so many schools with which the deans and associate deans are unfamiliar. When reading through the list, the administrators try to figure out how they have heard of the school. The associate dean of Windfall commented that he was trying to sort through whether he had knowledge of a school based on a good football or basketball team or whether they actually had

a good business school. The associate dean of Icon added, “there’s just this kind of national reputation that some schools have, maybe because of sports teams. For example, I was looking through and saw a name and thought, oh they’ve got a great basketball team.” These examples continue to demonstrate the complexity of how reputation is formed and that indirect influence, like sports, can be an important reputational factor.

While most administrators referenced benchmarking peer schools, several deans mentioned the importance of attending or leading regional conferences. The strategy to lead the regional conference was seen as essential in developing relationships with deans from second tier schools that vote in the *USNWR* survey. Becoming involved in a regional conference, especially as the only large school dean was considered by the dean of Windfall:

I think the others think it’s a waste of time and I think that it helps me make connections with the deans that vote. I mean this is sounding very cynical, we’re focused on it. But it affects your opportunities to be highly ranked.

Because all AACSB business school deans and associate deans vote in the *USNWR* ranking, spreading influence with schools that are not peers is a strategy shared by several of the more ranking conscious deans. While participating perhaps for a specific purpose, this is an example of how the reputation based ranking system can provide an incentive for administrators to participate with schools that are diverse, thus increasing the professionalism of the industry.

There was evidence that schools would more likely interact only with peers, including those listed in Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI), or in their own affinity clusters if ranking votes were not on the deans' minds. On the other hand, a negative effect of the larger schools vying for influence might cause institutional isomorphism as smaller or newer schools try to emulate the larger more prestigious players in business education.

Finally, the power of students to contribute to a school's reputation comes in many forms. When undergraduates transfer institutions, they share stories. Associate dean of Engage shared, "I may even know part of that (story about poor reputation) based on kids I know who have been through that program." Graduate students provide a wealth of experience because they move from their undergraduate school to their PhD program and find employment in a third institution. Along the way they share experiences from their academic programs and make impressions about the quality of their previous schools. In addition, when top graduates are on the market for jobs, they come back from recruiting visits and share information with their dissertation advisors and faculty members, further creating and enforcing perceptions about reputation.

The significance of this section is the diversity of the messages that people internalize when thinking about quality and the reputation of other schools. The messages fall into three categories: informal, formal, and experiential. The

informal messages surprised me by the detail in which respondents spoke about stories they had heard from others, perhaps family members or friends.

Obtaining information about others from employers is more obvious, and very common. The formal perceptions are derived from marketing and PR including magazines, benchmarking, peer communication, and EBI statistics.

Administrators are interested in their peers and are watching their Business Week metrics including the letter grades that are given to the schools in a variety of categories in this ranking. The Business Week undergraduate business school ranking is beginning to inform perceptions of quality for the *USNWR* rankings.

Finally, experience with schools, plays a critical role. This is not a surprise as many of the deans have worked in from two to six different schools. A number of people referenced their own undergraduate experiences as the first place they think of when setting their internal benchmark on quality. Fondly mentioning an undergraduate experience from thirty years earlier surprised me because the deans have had many more recent schools that they have been involved with.

Clearly, there is something very long lasting in one's memories of a four year undergraduate experience. Finally, the comments about realizing that all AACSB deans have a vote and the importance of developing networks with all types of schools provided an unexpected benefit of the ranking process as very

busy research institution deans find value, albeit self-serving, in interacting and attending conferences with much smaller schools with different missions.

Brand Perception and Characteristics of the Institution/School

Brand is defined as the “internalized sum of all the impressions received resulting in a distinctive position in the consumer’s mind’s eye” (Knapp, 2000). This section illustrates how administrators view the characteristics of business schools when forming opinions about quality. The findings include the effect of MBA programs on the perception of undergraduate programs, the effect of resource changes, the impact of leadership and how unique characteristics of school affect perceptions.

For administrators in undergraduate programs there is a constant competition between the MBA program and the undergraduate program. The competition includes everything from the use of classrooms to the way in which top faculty are allocated to teach in the programs. The dean of Windfall shared that the quality of a school’s MBA program had an impact on his perception of the undergraduate program. He said, “this is probably inappropriate but this is how reputation works, right, the halo effect.” The dean of Engage pointed out that the MBA programs are “flagship” programs and signal others of the quality of a school. Associate dean of Engage shared:

A lot of thinking and resources go into evolving the curricula at the executive and MBA levels and we learn from them. It makes sense to me that quality here should be very heavily impacted.

Another dean used the symbolism of an umbrella to illustrate that the ranking of a school's MBA program is the overarching brand of a school. The dean of Fortune believes that the MBA programs were ranked first and the undergraduate program "has a long way to go before the undergraduate rankings are on the same footing with MBA rankings." These findings have implications for resource decisions in a business school. Based on the comments about the dominance of the MBA brand, a dean might decide to invest in the MBA program and starve the undergraduate program because of the perception that MBA programs create the brand of the school. This is particularly important for students and parents to understand. In schools with large, well respected MBA programs, the undergraduate program could be highly ranked because of the halo effect. However, upon further investigation the undergraduate program could suffer from lack of resources, more part-time teachers, substandard classrooms, and overall have something of an inferiority complex relative to the dominant MBA program. When schools don't hang their reputation on the MBA program alone (perhaps they have a small MBA program) they might work harder to improve in the undergraduate ranking. In state schools in smaller

college towns, the emphasis has shifted more to the undergraduate program as MBA day time program enrollments have declined.

Throughout the interviews very little evidence suggested that a second tier school could move into the consciousness of the deans and associate deans allowing these schools to move up in the *USNWR* rankings. The administrators seemed to focus their perceptions on the kinds of qualities that are unique to large AAU institutions including research, reputation and history. The Dean of Windfall related that the brand name of the university and business school as a whole is important when considering reputation. He said, "if the university has a strong brand and a reputation for being a great university, then, I think, the assumption is that the business school must be pretty good." However, according to a number of deans, the knowledge that a school had a recent infusion of financial resources often caught their attention, even a second tier school. The dean of Windfall shared,

I think one thing that got a lot of attention to (school x) is they got a large donation to support PhD education, and they started paying PhD students about 30-40% more than most public business schools. Well, that gave them the impression that they have a lot of resources. They've also been hiring a fair number of faculty. So these kinds of events: they're hiring a lot of faculty, paying higher salaries, offering more support to PhD students. That can change perception.

When a school increases compensation of PhD students or faculty salaries the information is transmitted to deans quickly. Faculty members hold these schools

up as examples to convince deans to give their departments more resources. If department heads lose promising new PhD students and watch respected faculty move into a particular school, perceptions of quality are formed. Over time, the perception that a particular school has significant resources to recruit graduate students and hire faculty shape the reputation of a school. Another strategy mentioned by some of the deans included the importance of PhD programs and how graduating large numbers of PhD's become the reputational seeds of a program. Eventually some of these PhD's will become top researchers and deans and will someday fill out the *USNWR* ranking ballot with an affinity for their alma mater. In contrast, flash in the pan resources, without a quality program will cause initial perceptions of quality, but if top faculty leave after a couple of years, this creates negative perceptions of quality.

Deans of AACSB schools interact at national conferences and through accreditation visits. During accreditation visits there are often there committee members made up of selected peer school deans. Throughout the accreditation visit much is learned about the leadership, mission and execution of the mission by a school. We know that the tenure of deans is very short and most last only through their first five year review. Across the industry people watch the movement of leaders. The dean of Bright shared that he recently read a report that a school was experiencing difficulty finding a new dean. The absence of an

effective dean caused the loss of faculty at that particular school as well. He quoted, “they’ve had three deans in four years, and their faculty is falling apart, and their education is probably not that good because of those things. I’m going to rate them low.” The dean of a school is ultimately the brand manager as he/she makes decisions about communication and shapes the strategy of the brand. Constant movement of deans at a school causes a negative effect on the brand.

The overall characteristics of schools affect perceptions. The Windfall dean points out, “size is an interesting variable because the very biggest and the very smallest programs you know a lot about.” Large schools have large faculties, produce significant numbers of graduates and develop a reputation based on productivity. You simply hear a lot about large schools, good and bad. On the other hand, the dean contrasts the large schools with the prestige of elite private, high quality smaller schools that have solid reputations within business education. Knowing something about a school seems to be the key. The schools in the middle, regional schools, little known schools have a hard time competing in the “mind’s eye” in the reputation game.

The term “magnet school” was coined by the dean of Windfall. He pointed out that schools obtain reputation based on differentiators within a market. Top religious schools are able to attract the very best students of that particular

religion and this develops the perception of quality about the school and its graduates. Other distinctions that lead to “magnet schools” include good reputation and value pricing attracting the attention of students from many states. Most top state schools are regional and serve primarily students from their state. When top students in a state become attracted to an out of state school deans take notice and try to figure out why.

You guys are a magnet for out-of-state students. I think that, when people think about a somewhat affordable option, if you don't want to go to school in-state, (school x) is great. I mean, you get a ton of people from Southern California, Dean Windfall.

Perceptions about the student quality and factors that provide uniqueness in a study body attract attention. Deans are constantly thinking about positioning for students, faculty and resources. It is a common practice for both universities and business schools to have a list of aspirational peers. When thinking about reputation the dean of Moonlight shared that he immediately thinks of his aspirant peer schools. He shared that he has created a mental framework about quality based on his peer set. He commented, “this is what we hope to become.” The dean of Fortune illustrated his decisions about quality based on the competitive grouping he would put a school in.

If I have first-hand knowledge (their accreditation) of where I would put them in the pecking order and how they would compete for faculty and students, obviously, your ability to group people based on location and resources somewhat defines where you're going to wind up, just because of the nature of the competitive factors.

Competition for students, faculty and resources causes administrators to carefully watch their competition. A set of aspirational peers often becomes the mental framework for quality in the “mind’s eye” of the deans. This is why second tier, or schools that are very different in size or mission can struggle to get the attention of large state school administrators.

Strong MBA programs, ability to attract top students and faculty through resources and a “magnet position”, leadership and size all form perceptions that lead to reputation. Over time reputation becomes a brand or position within a consumers “mind’s eye” (Knapp, 2000). To illustrate the lasting effect of a brand reputation, the associate dean of Windfall shared a story about a colleague asking another to name the top marketing department in the country. A name was given and a couple of preeminent faculty members were named as a reason for selecting that school. However, two of the three people mentioned left over ten years ago and the third person was a major textbook author; in fact, the author of the “Four P’s of Marketing” which is now the framework for all introductory marketing courses. This influential faculty member is over 80 years old and hasn’t taught a course in years. This story illustrates how an academic brand is developed and the lasting effect it has in the “mind’s eye”. The Dean of Windfall provides another illustration of the lasting power of an academic brand,

I think there's a general perception of quality that you have which has been influenced for years and years and years. A school would have to do something really crazy to shake their strong reputation. But absence of missteps, I think that positive perceptions are really long lasting.

Some refer to this as the halo effect (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) in which decisions about a brand are influenced in subconscious ways. While we know our perceptions are clouded by reputation, sometimes we have no idea this is happening or feel we have to be a part of a group that shares this common understanding, almost peer pressure. This is considered the "designer" effect in which a halo of quality is perceived around an elite brand (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). The reflection of a school's MBA program ranking on the undergraduate program's reputation is an example of the halo effect. The "designer" effect explains why few administrators admit to benchmarking the top elite schools, so little is really known about quality, and yet the elite few have remained constant.

Student Focused Information

In sales, the highest form of flattery is when a satisfied customer sells your products for you. Students and their experiences in our programs can be leveraged to provide significant public relations. Administrators are listening and watching because of national case competitions and what their own students are reporting back based on interactions with peers at conferences and other networking functions. Competitions are a relatively new phenomenon and

schools with top reputations are sought out to participate. I was surprised by how important winning the competitions can be in developing the perception of student quality for deans and associate deans.

A surprisingly high number of responses from associate deans included references of quality based on a school hosting or winning a national student competition.

And when the students came back I was always interested in their reactions to how things went, what they thought about their educations, their competitor's education and everything. (Associate dean, Windfall).

Beyond student input measures like standardized test scores, deans and associate deans are interested in other reputational measures like competitions. The associate dean of icon explained that quality equates to student involvement. He mentioned a school by name and the importance of the ethics competition at that school. The associate dean of Bright shared that he appreciates a school for hosting a national leadership conference in which students share best practices from their schools. He said, "our students come back from those and say, 'other schools are doing this or that. Can we do that?'" Another student centered example came from the dean of Icon in which he had a number of MBA students that keep in touch with friends in other MBA programs across the country. He shared that these student networks often allowed good ideas to spread and that

his students had asked for improvements in his program based on ideas they learned from peers.

Because many undergraduate programs value engagement, it makes sense that the administrators are learning about reputation from their students as they interact with peers across the country. The finding here is that it's important to get students out networking. Also, performance in competitions is important and increasingly schools are putting resources into preparation classes and are taking performance very seriously. This has obvious implications for resource allocations as schools are increasingly putting resources into student travel and specialized courses for competitions.

AACSB and Professional Associations

The international accrediting agency for business schools, AACSB, has a strong history and brand itself. Responsible for organizing thought leadership and setting standards of practice, this national organization has influence with the stakeholders of business education. Organizations like AACSB are the subjects of studies of professionalism and institution theory as they develop culture and standards for an industry. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) illustrate through normative isomorphism that professionalism in higher education is legitimized through specialties and professional networks that unite the

professions across the world. This section confirms that these professionalism theories are accurate.

Every dean in the study mentioned the importance of interacting with AACSB. The most common form of involvement included participating in affinity group meetings and serving on accreditation review teams. The review team experience provides insight that shapes perception of quality:

The reason I know that is because I was their accreditor for a few years. I visited them. Their undergraduate program isn't quite as good. The faculty are very different faculty, they are not associated with the business school. So there was a difference in the rankings there. (Dean Bright)

Deans have inside information about schools in which they serve on accreditation and reaccreditation committees and this often influences ranking decisions. The accreditation visits last several days and significant time is spent between administrators, faculty and students with the review team over breakfasts, lunches and dinners. This informal interaction, as well as the more formal committee meetings often influences perception of quality. A few deans became very involved with national leadership in AACSB including service on the maintenance of accreditation committee. This committee reviews over 60 reaccreditation reports and serves to norm the standards of review teams. For the dean of Fortune, involvement on this committee produced great insight

about business education and the trends across the country. He was one of the few deans that indicated he ranks every school on the *USNWR* ballot.

Another example of how AACSB shapes business education is through the data they produce. A school can elect to be part of a peer group and pay for a report to learn specifics about that set of schools. The Dean of Fortune reports using this data to provide initial benchmarking information. His associate dean further surveys these peers and sometimes goes on visits to stay current with best practices. The associate deans are often the ones doing the follow up surveys and visits as they do not participate on the AACSB accreditation review teams. Visiting schools to obtain best practices is a common form of communication throughout business education. Other forms of networking and informal interactions with other professionals mentioned in the interviews included Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC), Beta Gamma Sigma (honor society of business) and GMAT Board of Directors.

Public relations can come in many forms with a variety of price tags. For business school leaders one golden opportunity for public relations comes in the form of professional involvement. The dean with the most active involvement with AACSB reported the smallest investment in direct marketing and PR for his school. He leverages his long tenure as a dean and his national involvement as his strategy for public relations for his school. This is an important finding as

deans think about how to get more from less. The value of attending national meetings, serving on accreditation teams and participating in AACSB meetings may increase the brand perception of a school and develop reputational capital.

Social Networks Win the Influence Prize

Most categories that influence our administrators have been explored, however, the overall most impactful influence is from social networks. It is clear that from professional affiliations in research groups, undergraduate and graduate training, NUBS the invitation only top undergraduate program meeting, AACSB leadership, AACSB accreditation visits, conferences and schools in which deans have worked over expansive careers combine to form strong social networks that ultimately create the most powerful influence on reputation of schools. This confirmed professionalism and institutional theory (Bledstein, 1976; Furner, 1975; and Haskell, 1977 in Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Rhoades, 1977) in which commitment to the professional values and skills and developing a professional reference group is important. Symbolic interactionism and social networks describe how people obtain information and make decisions based in response to one another (Blumer, 1969).

Examples of Associate Dean Social Networks

Associate deans generally are not research active and have been employed at fewer schools over their tenure. The nature of there is focused on the undergraduate program and the details of the operations of the program. For most of the associate deans in this sample their programs are quite large and the job is very demanding. As a result their social networks are more limited than the deans.

Conference attendance is a good investment because according to associate dean of moonlight, "I think a lot of times you draw your conclusions about places based on what you think of the people you've met." She goes on to share the importance of informal interactions over meals, and on bus-rides as the power of informal interaction to build familiarity and trust. She believes the informal interaction yields better information than formal conference programs. Specific references to the National undergraduate Business Symposium (NUBS) was the most popular associate deans' choice for networking because of the peer set, small conference format, trust developed from the group's history, annual interaction and informal nature of the annual meeting. Trust as a function of personal networks came up often with the associate dean of Mascot commenting, "I trust the NUBs schools because we've gotten to know one another. I feel comfortable with the assumption that the NUBS schools don't lie." In most cases

the associate deans are not research active. However, for some that continue involvement with their academic discipline's meetings they receive strong perceptions of quality based on research presentations and people that perform well at the meeting. According to associate dean of Windfall based on his attendance at accounting meetings, "the best faculty from the best schools somehow maps into a university's quality." Getting to know others can result from benchmarking visits as well. The associate dean of Windfall, new to his job commented that he is looking forward to visiting a school because "the associate dean is very friendly and has invited me out, so I may get out there." The associate dean from Mascot ranks schools based on if she knows the people and respects them. The associate dean of Millionaire echoes this sentiment, "from the schools I do know people at, I tend to put more attention into it, because I trust them and I know what they are doing in a broad sense." The associate dean of Icon mentioned his personal network resulted from conferences, email conversations about research or having students in common.

In contrast with business school deans, the associate deans have long tenures. These long tenures are helpful in the practice of developing social networks with other associate deans as well as with students. In one example, an associate dean started a Face Book community and now has 1600 alumni she interacts with regularly. She reported that when she attends alumni functions with her dean

the turn-out doubles. Since the average tenure of a business school dean is six years, a stable, well respected associate dean for the undergraduate program is a priceless asset and integral in developing the perception of the brand. Trust came up a number of times in the interviews and signaled that competition can create at times unethical behaviors. However, open communication with peers and forums to discuss pressures, help the associate deans get to know and trust one another. These findings are important as deans should invest in their associate deans travel and ability to develop professional social networks. Also, especially during difficult budget times, the value of the associate deans is often questioned. Faculty may believe they can step in and advise and provide the basic services. What is not clearly understood about the value of the associate dean is the value of the professional and student network that is developed over time. Just like a brand, people develop a following and perceptions develop about their schools as a result.

Examples of Deans' Social Networks

Unfortunately, business school deans often last in their positions only through their first academic review or fifth year. The deans I visited with included people that were in their first year on the job, seasoned deans very active in AACSB, a retired dean now on the faculty, someone recently appointed to a higher university post, and an interim dean. Social networks were

referenced as providing the most powerful insight into a school's reputation when the deans completed their USNWR ballot. The social networks of deans are complex. If a dean is effective he/she capitalizes on the daily interactions to build a complex network that includes faculty knowledge as a result of faculty recruiting, business executives as a result of advisory boards, a group of trusted peers as a result of personal efforts to engage other deans, developing global academic partners, and taking advantage of professional meetings and managing prior student networks.

Because deans have been in the business of recruiting faculty at many institutions they develop social networks that help them land top candidates.

The dean of Millionaire shared,

I know who faculties are just by being in this business for a long time having recruited a lot of people, looked at faculties, going to see people at conferences, you just know who these faculty are through personal, social contacts largely derived from faculty recruiting.

The social networks of this kind are replicated over time as top schools continue to graduate competitive new recruits and esteemed researchers introduce their students into the market or create new talent through coauthored work. This kind of network is fairly stable and predictable within an academic community.

Deans in top business programs interact with a number of business executives from top corporations that sit on a school's advisory board. The

board can be made up of successful alumni, corporate recruiters, prominent donors and friends of the college. The dean of Icon shared that he learned about the power of experiential learning from a General Electric executive that raved about the quality of the relationship he had with another school as a result of an effective partnership. The dean started a similar program with another corporation at his school. The dean's advisory board members, if managed well, can become friends of the school and strong advocates at review time and in times of financial stress. Often, the advisory board members contribute to salaries of top school deans. As a result the advisory board tries to help the dean advance the school and demonstrate success. For many deans this becomes a difficult juggling act between satisfying the board members and satisfying the faculty members. The dean of Bright talked about international trips with his board to help them develop a vision for international education while creating meaningful bonding experiences with the board members. The dean of Bright leans on his advisory board for placement of students, student mentoring and job networking. As a result he is committed to developing interactions between the board members and students, "we had our national advisory council meeting last weekend, and we had many, many touch points for students to mingle with these people and they and the students love it," dean, Bright. Deans build

success by developing meaningful networks that help employers and students succeed.

Another example of purposely developed social networks came from a dean new to the United States. "To me, the more I can keep my network spread, the better. Having said that, I have been surprised at the, here I speak very locally, at the competitive spirit," dean, Bliss. As the new kid on the block he reached out to all the deans of top schools in his region. He shared their reactions regarding this kind of interaction, "oh, it's great to have you. No one has ever done this before." This is an example of a best practice for a new dean regarding the importance of taking time to build networks of colleagues when one first begins a new job.

The topic of this study relates to the reputation of U.S. schools. However, increasingly U.S. business schools are crating relationships with global partners. AACSB is also providing accreditation to international business schools. Another kind of network mentioned by deans included global partnerships for delivering education abroad. Yet another example of the complex nature of a deans job.

Informal networks for business school deans come in a variety of forms. Ongoing contacts with former PhD students yield strong networks as many of students have become top research faculty or even deans themselves.

Surprisingly, academic excellence runs in families. The dean of Fortune shared that his brother, who is also a dean (with experience as dean in five schools) is a source of information as the brothers share perceptions about a wide variety of schools.

The final more obvious source of social networks comes from regional meetings, national meetings, benchmarking and AACSB as documented in previous sections. To illustrate just how important attendance at these kinds of meetings are to a school's reputation, the dean of Fortune pointed out at his last affinity group meeting that 14 of the 16 deans attended. He named the deans that were not in attendance. This was surprising that the dean noted who was missing and remembered months later as if missing the meeting was a serious mistake. The topics usually covered in these affinity groups include budget, faculty recruitment and sharing of best practices about academic programs. While misery often loves company, these meetings assist peers in understanding the realities of other school's environments. Deans desiring to move up in USNWR should as much as possible cast a positive light on their programs and become a sage influence in the group. Deans with long tenures make social contacts and can more comfortably use these meetings to their advantage as the new deans look for seasoned veteran advice.

Summary

The social networks turned out to be one of the most interesting findings of this study because of the variety of different sources of information. Coming as no surprise are the relationships that develop from AACSB and small affinity groups of like school deans. However, it was telling that one dean mentioned another by name, when he did not show up for a highly attended affinity group meeting last spring. Other less obvious examples of social networks assisting in the perceptions that create academic reputation included the deans' children's experiences with other schools, faculty recruiting, business executives, making friends when new to the job with other deans, international partner programs, former students, regional meetings, advisory board members, siblings in academe and the old fashioned benchmarking and visits.

One of the negatives of social networking came up indirectly with several of the participants in that they reported that the professional organization, AACSB's conferences are so large and include such a diverse group of schools so administrators tune out or do not participate. This is why a number of comments emphasized affinity groups or invitation only member groups. In fact, it appears that the larger schools may only participate in large AACSB sessions to network and improve the reputation of their own school, rather than learn from others. One participant told me that the AACSB conferences have

become useless, too diverse, and rarely can you find people with similar size institutions, similar challenges, and situations. This presents a challenge for a large professional organization like AACSB that is working to set standards and achieve a set of norms for all of business education. AACSB is benefited from the perception based rankings as large state schools leverage social networks to try to gain a ranking advantage through social networking and the sharing of best practices.

Other findings in this category included what could be characterized by “founders syndrome” which is a common term used in non-profit management in which the founder becomes the brand because of the strength of his/her personality. A very well networked dean with a long tenure, that is dedicated to professional involvement and building positive relationships can easily be the first person that comes to mind when considering the qualities of a school. Since the average tenure of a dean is short, a long-seated, successful dean can add significant value to his/her brand as a variety of stakeholders look to that dean and school for advice and sage wisdom.

The cumulative effect of the variety of influences identified in this section reinforces the research on professionalism and institution theory in which, institutions come to look like one another (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). In the quest for reputation in the market certain innovations take hold and become the operating norm in establishing legitimacy (i.e. ethics, leadership, globalization, entrepreneurship, etc). Isomorphism relates to organizations with similar environmental conditions that come to resemble each other. Both competitive and institutional isomorphism was illustrated in this section as the respondents made it clear that they are friendly,

yet always competing for resources and customers, political power, and institutional prestige.

The theory of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) was illustrated through the examples of work or jobs created to manage rankings or attend to work that increases school reputation. The Associate Dean of Windfall explained that his students have won more case competitions than any other year as a result of the school hiring an excellent instructor that is in charge of a class called “case competitions”. Another example of academic capitalism came from the dean that told me that he has increased the travel budget for his faculty and administrators to network with others in the profession.

The halo effect (Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D., 1977) is a classic theory in social psychology that overall reputation of a person or institution can bleed over into perceptions of specific attributes of the organization. This is best illustrated in the situation in USNWR when a school is ranked at the top in every academic department even though they don’t have that program or department in their school. One of the deans in this study said, “When I was at the (school) for years and years and years we always ranked in the top five in our undergraduate HR program which we did not have.” Many of the participants referenced the halo effect and the strength of the top schools in the business school market, Wharton

and Michigan in particular. One respondent used the term “lay knowledge” of the reputation of schools, which is an indicator of brand strength. Many commented that they don’t have to work very hard to know the quality of these top schools and don’t receive marketing information from them. One associate dean commented, “I’d pay attention, rather than putting down Wharton in every single category, although, I would probably also do that.” However, it wasn’t clear from the interviews that specific best practices in the industry come from these top schools. Rather, the reputation seems long-lasting and permeates the mind’s eye.

This section gives important insight into how administrators are influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools. Findings include the importance of developing social networks and how trust and diverse relationships go a long way in helping to build the reputation of a school. This section also reinforces integrated communication, in that everything an academic leader does makes an impression on someone and administrators should think carefully about the opportunities and implications of their social networks.

How the Judges Complete their Ballots

“Comments should be given in a positive manner by judges, examples would be: Great Smile, Beautiful Presentation, Love that Outfit, You Go Girl” The Whole idea of pageants is to lift people up and motivate them to be the best they can be” Good Judging is Critical to the Success of Our Beauty Pageant.”
(Shelly Winters Black)

In the previous sections we investigated the judges’ definition of academic quality and obtained insight into their social consciousness to discover what influences their perceptions of reputation when completing the *USNWR* ranking ballot. In this section we are digging deeper to discover what really happens at the scoring table and if competitors are treated differently when completing the ranking survey. As we know from many competitions in our youth, politics and social networks can sometimes play a more powerful role in scoring than data or performance. This section illustrates the deans’ and associate deans’ perceptions of honesty in the ranking process and illustrates strategies that the participants are familiar with that are employed to influence favorable scoring.

Remember the scoring ballot asks for input on all the AACSB accredited U.S. undergraduate business programs. The Dean and Associate Dean are each mailed a ballot in April. Last year 42% of the judges responded and this became the basis for the ranking. When a school fails to respond a follow-up survey is

sent out a second time as a reminder. The judges are asked to score schools on a scale of 1 (marginal) to 5 (distinguished) with a category for “unknown”. This is a daunting task, as few people have knowledge of more than 50 or so very well known state schools, or perhaps they have knowledge from their region or within their own social network of peer schools. This section illustrates ranking methods, how deans and associate deans work together to complete the survey, investments in moving up in the rankings, and the politics of scoring the ballot.

General Methods

I asked the 20 participants “how they ranked”, specifically what method they used to derive scores. There were a variety of responses including the “AAU” university method in which respondents admitted to scoring only those schools they knew something about. Consequently, in this sample, since 8 out of the 10 schools interviewed are members of AAU, this would make sense. Also, of the schools in the top 50 of USNWR undergraduate programs, the majority are AAU institutions. My interviewees seemed to admit that they had knowledge of about 20-50 of the more marquee schools. They tended to have knowledge based on observations of program strength over a long period of time.

Unknown Schools: Popularity Contest

Many of the administrators worried that they just didn't know enough about all the schools to rank them. Most of the sample said things like, "so I think that's the unfortunate part, that, if you're not known, then there's a tough road ahead of you to get out of the lowest category," Dean Fortune. There is an overall feeling that most judges will not take the time or really have the ability to get to know schools that are outside of their own region or affinity group. Consequently, according to the majority of the responses the judges rank "unknown schools" in the "don't know" category or leave the schools blank. In a few cases, the respondents did admit to ranking them in the lowest of scales if he/she "didn't know". This is because some people believe that "if you don't know" then the school is simply not very good. "I try to teach professionals, always listen to what's not being said, it's more important than what people are jabbering about. What I didn't talk about was what do I do with a school that I don't know. I don't evaluate it but, then it's hard, because you fight your own perceptions," said assoc. dean Moonlight. There seems to be a nagging belief that if a school doesn't have a reputation or brand identity that they shouldn't be considered a top program.

Collective Thinking and Coaching

Only one dean answered that he fills out the entire USNWR ballot. He explains this strategy because he has a long tenure as a dean and is very active in professional associations.

For me, the rankings have always been pretty easy to do because you have these different ranking groups. So I kind of divide them and kind of make the percentages work. They give you these five scales, and I've had unknowns very few times. And, so I have, in my mind, who will be in the top -I break it out by percentages. In other words, you can't have 90% of the schools in the highest ranking, that doesn't make sense. I also rank the faculty things first, because it's a much smaller step. That tends to put things in perspective. Another interesting thing I've noticed over the years, some years I'll start the survey with the A's and some years I'll start with the Z's because you kind of run out slots, in some sense, Dean Fortune.

Most participants took a much simpler approach with the practice of assessing what they know about a given school, adequately scoring their perceptions, and honestly utilizing the "don't know" category.

At the back of the USNWR undergraduate ballot the judges are asked to rank the top schools in the functional areas of business. Most respondents indicated that they polled their department heads to develop this list. In a few cases, administrators with long tenures completed the list based more on history and tradition of the schools.

One area in which most agree is that the USNWR ranking survey comes at one of the busiest times in the spring semester. April is a very busy month as the

semester is nearing a close and planning escalates for the next summer and fall. I asked the administrators about the process of filling out the ballot at their schools, since two individuals receive the scoring ballot. Most don't have an agreed upon protocol but use different methods depending on the experience of the ranking team and the time pressure to get the ballot completed. Some of the schools fully coordinate their rankings and share information about their unique knowledge of schools, "When (name) was the dean, I'd go and talk to him, he'd say, put down what you think, but these guys...he'd start working into it and then the last couple of years I'd just do it with him and he basically lost interest", Associate Dean Mascot. In some schools, only the undergraduate office completes the scoring ballots for both the dean and associate dean as the assumption is they have the most knowledge of the undergraduate programs. Another dean responded that he has three people analyze last year's rankings and compare them with any new information or program the group has knowledge of and moves rankings up or down in an appropriate fashion. "We do have resources we devote to it. Unfortunately, it takes a lot of time and effort to go through it but, you know, we use it here at the university at the highest levels for the whole university. We look at *USNWR* as one of the key ranking indicators for the University, so it's taken seriously at that level." dean Icon. Another participant shared that the dean fills the ballot out first and sends it to

his associate dean. They don't "coordinate" if they have a difference of opinions, but the dean does share his opinions. While many claimed to independently fill out the ranking, it was common to hear a comment about someone ensuring that the ballots got completed and turned in. "My administrative assistant checks to make sure that they were filled out and completed," said dean, Windfall. Finally, a couple of administrators new to the job didn't realize that two ballots were sent to their schools and that the undergraduate associate dean filled one out as well.

In the spirit of academic capitalism, yet another coordinated process has been shaped on a campus as personnel spend valuable time reporting and following up on rankings.

This past year, we devised a procedures manual for the rankings and who's responsible for collecting data, and where is it to reside, and who's responsible for putting it all together, and who's responsible for reviewing. Because, the year before we got into a situation where data was being reported that was inconsistent with what had been reported previously and, as it turns out, it all depends on how you count students, Dean Windfall.

This is an example of negotiating the more quantitative *Business Week* data collection, but is still a relevant example of how market driven activities are creating additional work within the business school programs. Enhanced managerial capacity is an effect of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The complex networks and increased work from responding to the

rankings require attention, support, and people to manage the process. When contrasting the methodologies between the Business Week rankings and the reputation based *USNWR*, the *USNWR* requires less administrative management. The Business Week ranking requires data collection and tracking to ensure that what is reported tells the story that best advantages the school.

Investment in Winning: An Active Improvement Strategy

A follow-up question in this category included asking participants about active strategies at their schools to move up in the rankings. I knew that one of the schools had specific goals in their strategic plan, to be a top ten public. I asked the new dean about this and he told me that he truly believes he has a top 10 faculty. Consequently, he thinks that if they do “a few things right” they should appear in the top 20 for both undergraduate and MBA rankings. This same dean reported an active strategy to improve in the rankings by wanting to meet with other school deans and share information about schools.

Unfortunately, he reported quite a difficult year and he wasn’t able to follow-through on his PR plan. He expressed the difficulty of the dean’s job, “there are only so many days in a year.” On the other hand, he has continued a ranking task force to strategize what they can do better. Ranking task forces were a common response to my questions about an active strategy to improve in the rankings. One dean reported including both faculty and alumni on the

committee. Why include alumni? The dean from Mascot answered this question,

I know for a fact that at (school), the man who gave them the money to start, (name), apparently he got really annoyed that their ranking was not going up and he stopped giving them money. But maybe they think: "Oh god, if my ranking drops, I'm going to lose my biggest benefactor....But unfortunately, they are talking ranking all the time in business schools. Believe it or not, engineering schools don't do this really as much, nor do law schools or medical schools, Dean, Mascot.

This quote illustrates the importance of rankings to business school stakeholders and the unique relationship the deans have to those that use the rankings to signify the value of their investments. Business schools more commonly rely on outside donations to support their mission than other professional schools. For example, engineering colleges often rely on grant and research support to fund their work. Because donors are interested in prestige and being associated with highly reputed schools pressure is constantly on business school administrators to improve in the rankings. Another ranking improvement team included faculty that understand the rankings really well and advised the school about the impact of the different rankings. Still another dean commented on the importance of selecting the specific rankings to emphasize, as performing well in one could actually create a negative effect on another.

Associate Dean from Windfall said,

There is an active campaign. It's explicit. He (dean) has gone on record as saying one of our goals is to be the best public business school in the fortune and it's to be in the top five business schools in the shorter

term. He meets with me once a year asking me what I've done to work towards that goal so it's a real goal and he takes me to task on every year.

The associate dean from Fortune reported the importance the University President places on rankings in specific peer groups. The Future University President compares apples to apples when allocating resources and doesn't fall into the thinking that a highly ranked business school compared to the rest of the campus warrants more money. Most of the respondents spoke about task forces trying to understand the recent Business Week rankings as that ranking is more quantitative and has far more categories of input data and is more difficult to understand. Many of the responses about strategizing the rankings are in response to the voluminous MBA rankings and the more confusing Business Week rankings, " I think Business Week has brought us to our knees. And we all know what they do, they change the classes, they change how they run the data, and basically collect it....year-to-year, it's been a struggle for us", associate dean Moonlight. One dean answered inadvertently when I asked him about the *USNWR* undergraduate ranking with an MBA answer on gaming the system, "I could make my rankings go up tomorrow if I was willing to cut my program in half. ...It's not a better school, it's just because there are basically fewer students, higher quality students. I could raise my GMAT stats...but it's just not the optimal thing to do." Dean, Engage. Overwhelmingly the respondents agree that MBA rankings produce the most pressure on a business school because rankings

are important to students and recruiters. The opinions on attempting to directly influence the undergraduate *USNWR* ranking are mixed. The associate dean of Moonlight said, "I usually think it is a waste to try to influence the undergraduate ranking and I'm fairly vocal about that." Associate dean, Engage commented, "Strategies to influence the influencers which would be recruiters and program directors and deans get talked about, not a ton, but once or twice per year." The undergraduate associate deans agree that rankings in *USNWR* are difficult to understand and therefore not worth "gaming". However, unfortunately, the pressure on ranking results is beginning to mount as Business Week becomes an even more accepted and analyzed ranking source for undergraduate programs. There are signs, much like the pressure on MBA deans, that the quantitative Business Week rankings are changing the undergraduate programs in a negative way. Top schools are discussing enrollment decreases and implementing strategies to recruit only students with top standardized test scores. There is concern that economically disadvantaged students could be hurt by undergraduate business programs that change enrollment practices to chase top rankings. At a recent meeting of associate deans the dinner discussion concentrated on the pressure being placed on associate deans to improve in the Business Week rankings. *USNWR* is seen as a comfortable, stable ranking, but difficult to influence.

The Politics of Scoring

I asked the participants about the ranking process and many reported practices that they consider of the highest ethics from their own school.

However, the question yielded a variety of approaches to “gaming the rankings”.

One associate dean, did admit,

My current dean absolutely would refuse to do that (down rank close competitors). Have I worked for deans that have thought that way, sure, I can admit that that has happened in the past. It’s really a small, very small number of cases where we have direct competitor that is next to our state and we get a lot of their students from that school and visa versa and it is very competitive. We rank typically about the same so that is the sensitive one, but currently we don’t do that stuff. We sometimes think we are being stupid not to. I think you have to really rank with some integrity or it is just absolutely noise and not worth it, Associate Dean, Millionaire.

The practice of down-ranking close competitors (mark them as low so they have at least one ranking disadvantage) was cited as a temptation, but many of the participants communicated the hope that “it’s like one of these do unto others as you want to have them do unto you. You sort of rank them equally and not down-rank them ...and not trash them out of spite or malice or whatever”, associate dean Bliss.

One associate dean reported knowledge of others down-ranking her school. She also admitted that because the schools are in her evoked set, she has a lot of knowledge about them and has a true sense of “if they are worthy”, associate dean Engage. Another perspective on “gaming” the ranking comes

from Dean of Windfall in which he believes that some judges might over-rate their own school in a particular set of schools, not necessarily down-rank others. Most of the respondents emphatically denied ever doing “funny stuff” with the ranking ballots. Many however could either speculate or “have heard of people doing this.” Subconscious bias in which “we are not aware that it’s affecting our decision making”, in a sense, the reverse of what is known to social psychologists of the halo effect was also cited, as well as a “negative aura” around schools that are strong competitors. During a conversation after I asked this question, the dean told me about a competitive school, “...I know them pretty well, so I know what kind of school they are, but I didn’t rank them lower because they’re a competitor,” Dean Bright. I believe that often the administrators know their close competitors and are aware of their beauty and their warts and this does enter into their judgments as they complete the ranking. Another dean of Impress pointed out that deans are driven by self-interest and that is why the methodology is flawed. This is an example of a kind of thinking that might compel people to strategically down rank others,

The best ranked is (school) and (school). Because when I select them, it doesn’t alter my position at all, but when I think about the genuine schools that I compete with, the ones that I compete with, there’s a margin in that kind of survey bias. My self-interest is served by not including them in my ranking, even if I think they could....I’d be lying if I said it doesn’t color my thinking. I’d love to be a saint, but I’m not, Dean Impress.

One of the newer associate deans commented that he was cleaning out his office and found his predecessors *USNWR* ballots and found them “significantly different than mine or his opinion differed significantly...he was significantly more experienced or mature at his job than me and I’m sure he gamed it because there’s a value to gaming it.” Associate Dean Windfall. These examples illustrate the competitive environment of business school, for students, faculty and donor support. Further, the very nature of anonymous peer reviews are tempting to game in favor of one’s own school as resources and jobs depend on success in the rankings.

When it comes to the specific departmental rankings at the end of the *USNWR* ballot, there are definitely reports of gaming, “I am aware of schools that lobby friends and say will horse trade; I’ll put you in top 10 if you’ll put me in the top 10”. In the department ranking, some have referred to this as “the faculty ranking” the list is derived from a basic count of those schools mentioned the most. Many of the deans shared that the faculty ranking was the most important outcome of the *USNWR* survey. There is usually a correlation between top faculty/departments and overall perception of quality in a school and the rankings follow.

Summary

I had guessed that because regional competition is fierce, based on some of the conversations I had with the deans about attracting top students, that down-ranking and other competition related influences would have been a more prevalent finding. However, most deans reflected ethical practices and reported only suspecting or guessing about such practices. One participant did mention that he tended to know more about a close competitor and if he ranked them down, it was less about “gaming” and more about knowing the good, bad and ugly characteristics of a competitor. I also suspected that the three private schools in my sample would have been more committed to moving up in the rankings because I thought they might have a more critical stake in competition for students given their high price tags. The private school administrators did speak to the sense of competition in the market, however, I did not get a sense that the competition drove them to unethical practices for this ranking.

In summary, the deans of the top business schools with the strongest halo effect, everyone mentions them, Wharton, Harvard and Michigan are believed to “not have to care” about the rankings. The other deans have a reason to care about the rankings. Dean, Windfall comments,

Then there are people like me, who are concerned about how our rankings look because, unfortunately some people tend to take it very seriously, no matter how good our faculty is. So, to me, I know that I’m

typical of everybody, I look at the ranking and say, “where should I improve?” To do better next time. So that’s really the only question I ask.

The importance a university president, external stakeholders and deans place on rankings does create ranking pressures that may contribute to down ranking and other behaviors. Few admit to these practices, but many share “stories” that are illustrative. Ironically, from the quote at the beginning of this section on judging a beauty pageant, it says that the judges have a duty to “lift people up and make them the best they can be”. Perhaps this is the positive side of rankings, a true look at one’s program with a critical eye and the understanding of how others see your program.

This chapter outlined quality, how perceptions form to create reputation and how administrators are actually completing the USNWR ballot every April. Deans emphasize top faculty, research and resources in describing quality of an undergraduate program, or in their world, the business school in general. The associate deans are caught in the knowledge that overall reputation derived from high quality faculty and research may not directly affect the undergraduate experience. Top faculty within a business school often teach PhD seminars and MBA courses. The undergraduates are often taught with lecturers, clinical faculty and adjunct instructors. As a result undergraduate teaching can be variable. This is why the associate deans tend to emphasize the student experience with parents and prospective students. Consequently, the associate

deans tended to illustrate quality from the perspective of student engagement. Reputation is a result of complex perceptions. The perceptions of quality in a school come from social networks, involvement in professional associations (AACSB), direct marketing, other ranking publications, the halo effect of MBA programs, student networks including outcomes of student competitions and the information obtained through many faculty recruitment cycles. Finally, the pressure a university president, stakeholders or deans put on earning high rankings can affect how administrators score their annual *USNWR* ballot. Regional competition and knowledge of competitors does enter subconsciously and consciously when completing the ranking. An unknown school or a school with an unknown reputation will not fare well in the *USNWR* ranking.

CHAPTER FIVE: A BEAUTIFUL IMAGE: INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

"Eight-Time Beauty Queen and Top Pageant Coach Reveals Insider Secrets That Will Virtually Guarantee You'll Win Your Next Pageant"
(<http://www.pageant-tips.com/>)

"The promise of an experience", branding involves internalized impressions, distinction, functional and emotional benefits to the consumer (Marconi, 1993; Knapp, 2000). Today's universities and named schools are brands. Students, alumni and other stakeholder can describe the unique experience derived from their involvement with the brand. However, brand value rarely emerges without strategic market positioning (Moore, 2004). Brand value is created by the process of branding defined as creating relationships between the product/service and a target market (Alreck & Settle, 1999). This section is grounded in the integrated marketing communication framework (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998) in which brand value is linked to all communication. Consequently, understanding the method of communication within a brand helps provide insight about the differentiation, relevance, esteem, awareness and unspoken understanding or "mind's eye" of the experience (Knapp, 2000). From the previous chapter where we explored how academic reputations are formed,

communication was found to be an integral part of the strategy to position a school so that peers know about its quality.

This chapter provides a better understanding of how business school administrators understand branding and effectively use communication to strengthen their brand. In the beauty pageant analogy marketing represents all the meticulous efforts to prepare for the competition so the audience and judges see the most beautiful and poised contestant. This chapter summarizes integrated marketing communication and how schools position their brands, how they communicate their ranking success or lack of success, how over saturating marketing can have a negative effect, how schools muddle through the practice of identifying and using a pithy tagline to describe their features and how integrated marketing communication translates into a holistic student experience in which relationships are emphasized moving higher education from a transaction to a relationship.

Brand Development

Education falls under the services marketing category (Berry and Parsuraman, 1993, Fisk et al, 1993). Education is defined by its people, knowledge, and intangible transactions (Lovelock,1983; Thomas, 1978). The relationship with the customer is continuous and involves a relationship with the provider (Lovelock, 1983). Customization is becoming an increasing trend in

education (Nicholss, 1987) and the market produces fluctuations in demand and supply. Beyond what we think of as direct marketing, today's seasoned marketing personnel understand that the communication, formal and informal, sets the real tone of the organization. This can include how the dean, for example, dresses, what he/she says in faculty meetings, what he/she talks about informally, and what the organization values (Watzlawick, Bavela and Jackson, 1967). Another modern practice in service marketing includes a heightened focus on relationships and meaning (Planalp, 1989; Shramm, 1973).

With 482 business schools with undergraduate programs actively competing for prestige in the market, for the attention of corporate recruiters, and students, market competition can be stiff. In certain parts of the country for example Philadelphia, Atlanta and Boston there are competitive public and private schools and there is a very strong sense of academic saturation. "There are places where you fight tooth and nail for every student that you get unless you're in the top five (ranking)," shared, associate dean, Bliss. She goes on to reference a competitor down the street that has executed well on their notion of distinction and has created a strong brand in the "mind's eye" of the business school community and relevant consumers. In particular, there is a perceived difference in resources between private and public schools as each school seeks to find its position in the market. "You start further south on the coast, there are

schools like (name) and (name) and (name) that I would call our competitors, ... we are striving to improve and be better than them, but we are a humble state school,” commented, associate dean, Windfall. The perception of the power of resources is on the mind of administrators as they compete for ranking, reputation and prestige. Those that appear to have a lot of resources get the attention of many deans. Having a strong marketing presence seems to signal that a school has a healthy budget.

The Influence of Cross Marketing on Judges and Stakeholders

The administrators interviewed were mixed on direct marketing as an influence on rankings. However, most valued the information they receive every April from other schools to influence their perceptions. When the deans had time to read some of the information, they often shared innovations with their colleagues. One dean talked about moving from a highly ranked school to another school, not as highly ranked.

He realized that the students in his new school were every bit as bright as the students in the more highly ranked school. When thinking about why there was a difference in the rankings of the schools he decided that public relations must be the difference. “The dean at the time ... didn’t have this sense of going out and representing the school and having a good PR campaign. So one of the first things I did as a dean was to make sure we had a tremendous PR director,” Dean

Bright. Another effective explanation about the practice of producing April ranking materials came from the Associate Dean of Impress as he described the religious practices of many in India,

We pray to God before we do anything. It is not like very serious. Someone is asking the scientist, you are a scientist embarking on this, why take the risk, it only takes one minute to say a prayer. If there is truth I don't want to offend any God. I feel the ranking practices are like that, everyone does it (marketing). Because somebody tells the marketing department, if you told it would have been better.

This is a good quote because the 20 administrators I interviewed had a lot of differing opinions about how they were affected by direct marketing by schools, half positive and half negative, but almost everyone had a story of learning something that came across their desk in the form of a magazine or e-communication. So the belief has become widely held that participating in April marketing can improve the perception of peers about the quality of a program, especially if a school has an innovative or distinctive program to inform others about. Dean of Windfall commented,

Let's say, a third-tier school sends me their brochure. Will I read it? Most likely not. If I get a brochure from (aspirant school) I'll thumb through it and might read an article that grabs my attention. It's probably more effective for top schools than others, unless they have a real breakthrough, (defined as significant donation or hiring trend).

The communication lesson from this quote is that the sheer volume of materials that come across a business school administrator's desk is

overwhelming. When deciding how to spend time reading about other schools, it makes sense that administrators will read materials provided by peers or aspirational peers. Consequently, a way to trim marketing expenses would be to provide marketing materials only to other peer schools and not borage the entire list of AACSB schools. The good news is that many administrators actually read the materials they receive from schools as the Dean of Icon shares:

I've got about ten stacks of magazines here that I cycle through. Eventually, I'll read them all. I'll look at them but then, of course, I'll throw them out. But I'll send them to people around my college and say take a look. So, it's a great learning tool ... that probably helps me score them ... I look at that program in much more detail and I know that they're a lot better than just "average" they're maybe "good".

This quote demonstrates that an effective direct marketing publication can affect the conscious and subconscious ranking decisions in the USNWR ranking ballot. However, many deans and associate deans commented on the sheer number of publications and cross marketing materials they receive in April prior to the USNWR balloting, "everyday you'll get 5, 6,7, 8, 9, 10 of the brochures, magazines, pamphlets, gadgets and widgets ... that tout the quality of these programs," Dean Icon. Comments about resources came up frequently. One response from a dean included his perception that a school must have resources to produce the sheer volume of materials he received from them, "it gives me the impression they have resources," Dean Windfall. In an indirect way, this did

influence his thinking. A higher number of the participants in this study than I would have guessed reported reading the materials if time permitted. Time and workload seemed to be the major reason of not reading brochures and enews. Penetration of the materials appeared random with timing a particular trick of the trade. The Dean of Icon explained:

I go to web pages a lot. You know, with the economy many people are cutting back on a number of paper mailings and you get an email link to their web pages. I try to reserve a few hours per week to catch up on those emails. The (name of school), electronic letter from (name of Dean) and others. You know where people might spin things a little above where they're actually delivering in terms of quality. So, it doesn't take long to figure out who's doing well and who's not.

Spin and blatant stretching of the truth is often detected by deans that have significant experience in business school education. If schools stretch the truth, marketing can actually have a detrimental effect on brand perception.

Overall comments like, "publications help on the margin" or "receiving these materials helps me follow what is going on in the country", signify that the deans and associate deans do find value in learning about national trends in business schools. The only caveat is that deans pay attention to schools most like their own. If the dean's hasn't heard of a school or were not familiar with it in their "mind's eye" the attempt at influence was often wasted as shared by Associate Dean of Icon:

I've never heard of these programs. So maybe one reason they're doing it is to get my attention. But I guess some of the mindset is that, if you've got a top quality product, you don't need to go market it necessarily. So, there have been some, I see really glossy ones and I've actually negative inferences-negative responses - because it's like you're trying too hard.

Again, not all messages received are favorable messages after receiving high quality direct marketing. Academics seem to have an elite set of schools in which they place high reputational capital and this seems to be difficult to change.

The group's comments were rather mixed on preference for email or direct mailed publications. The Associate Dean of Millionaire said, "physical pieces for me, there is a chance that it'll be on my desk, I may not get to it as fast, but may pick it up later. It is harder for me to keep track of email." The flip side of this is a comment from the Dean of Icon, "when I get the emails, I'll go to the link to the stories, and I'll check the stories which lead me to something else on the web site." The AACSB's Biz Ed Magazine was one of the strongest sources of reported information. The Deans report reading Biz Ed and forwarding articles to their program directors. They don't always remember the schools in the articles, but they find the information helpful. Some reported valuing the AACSB literature as the publication was not seen as marketing and stories were vetted for their substantive value to others.

In the USNWR ranking methodology, most deans don't understand the reputation game or how the scores are derived; consequently, they don't believe that influencing the judges has an adequate return on investment. The Dean of icon said,

I've been told by many others and they've done studies of various rankings, and nothing that you can do can move certain categories. You hear stories like that and you're fighting a losing battle to try to spend money to improve, but a lot of schools do move, but then move back down.

As we learned in the previous chapter, reputation is a function of many perceptions over time. This quote reinforces that flash in the pan kind of innovation may get early attention, but if the effort is not sustained, the school may very quickly drop out of the mind's eye of the judges.

As is true with most marketing, sometimes the effect of marketing is not what was intended. A couple of deans report being impressed simply with the marketing approach (not the substance) and use it as a best practice for some project they are working on for their school. Consequently, the effect of creative marketing may influence other school's marketing practices, not necessarily improving perceptions about another school's brand. The Dean of Bliss mentioned that a slick marketing brochure from a competitor signals not that the competitor school is excellent, rather the PR people at Bliss better pick up their game to attract top students. Simply stated imitation is the best form of flattery.

The previous examples have concentrated on direct marketing through brochures, flyers or email communications. However, integrated marketing communication utilizes many different techniques to favorably influence brand perceptions. There are a lot of creative examples that range from what we characterize as direct marketing to creative approaches to build networks of people that carry the institutional brand.

Some schools try to position themselves as thought leaders within business education. Examples of this kind of PR include sending white papers on topics of interest to deans and associate deans, for example, mailing cutting edge research on millennial students and a note that says, “thought you might be interested”. Another dean shared that he worked with his national advisory board to write a book about ethics, as they collectively felt ethics education was a distinction of the school. Dean of Bright said the book *Business with Integrity*, “all grew out of our national advisory council and expertise we had of people who were in their firms and they helped us figure out how to get the message out.”

Network marketing is another method of influencing perceptions about reputation. The deans shared a variety of methods including selecting the right kind of influential speakers so that the visitors would help spread the reputation of the school. Economic outlook lunches that attract regional business leaders in which school economists forecast economic trends were also mentioned in the networking category. Summer programs including a “wall street 101” type of program and participation in LEAD a national precollege diversity program helped provide previews of schools while also building networks from feeder schools and within communities of interest to particular schools. A partnership with a very popular, widely read national magazine yielded some very unique

marketing opportunities for Bliss School of Management. The Dean of Bliss mentioned that the magazine partnership featured student awards and an advertising campaign showcasing faculty research. He said, “we’re well-established regionally, but for the last five years at least, and really the last decade, we’ve really been trying to get more known on the national and North American front.” In the partnership with the national magazine the school and the magazine work to select and showcase a group of 25 top high school juniors from around the world. “The students are showcased and the parents come to Bliss’ Global Leadership Forum, this is really just a PR kind of effort,” said the Dean of Bliss. Symposiums, conferences and competitions were mentioned as very important features in both networking and reputation building by many deans. In particular, the associate dean of Bliss shared information about a global business ethics symposium and said, “we market the thing to death by bringing in people from the outside to attend. It also reflects one of our strengths in business ethics and corporate social responsibility.” Finally, an under-utilized marketing and networking tactic by public schools is a strategic advantage of private schools, the carefully managed alumni network. The dean of Bright shared that he had just been out to Walnut Creek, CA to interact with an alumni group. He said, “I put a big emphasis on the alumni helping each other find jobs. If you’ve lost a job in that area, the Management Societies come together to help.”

The value of social networks is becoming one of the most modern forms of reputational capital. Schools that have been keeping in contact with their local businesses and alumni groups are advantaged. As the dean of Bright mentioned, after the recent downturn in the economy many private schools turned to their alumni for support to help identify jobs for recent graduates and help identify middle management opportunities for displaced alumni.

There are other more obvious tactics in integrated marketing communication including the naming of schools. Not only does a named school signal a significant increase in resources, it places a school in an elite category. The Dean of Fortune has taken the naming further as his named school is the overarching label for all of the business school programs. In order to promote the PhD, MBA and undergraduate programs uniquely he has split his business college into three schools, “we are organized into three schools...to raise the visibility of the undergraduate program.” Schools with new buildings also leverage the PR opportunity. The associate dean of Millionaire commented, “we have a lot of tremendous publicity and PR from the excitement of raising money, of designing plans, of sticking the shovel in the ground, grand opening, sorts of things that a new building gives you.” New buildings with state of the art technology provide a factual way to showcase a business school’s vision and culture while signaling that the school is well supported financially.

Because most business schools have strong marketing communication teams and very high priced MBA programs that compete in crowded markets, it makes sense that some marketing is creative and clever. Examples of clever campaigns included deans being sent boxes of jalapeno peppers with the message, “this is a hot school”. According to the Dean of Bright, he started sending things like this out about 12 years ago before others were doing this kind of marketing and believes that “people started to notice us more”. Another dean mentioned that a school capitalized on the Swine Flu scare and sent out hand sanitizer with the message, “wishing you a happy, safe, and healthy holiday season, from this one college of business”. Note that the dean did not report the name of the school which demonstrates that the trinkets are interesting, but the clever idea doesn’t necessarily impact the reputation of the school that sent the item. It isn’t clear that the deans remember the schools that send these kinds of creative items. “Sweat equity in a jar” was received by the Dean of Icon. He was so impressed with the creativity that he did further research the school,

I got this package and I’m like, what is this? And I shook it, and it sounded like liquid inside and I’m like, ‘whoa’, should I open this? It turned out to be ‘sweat equity in a jar’...I thought it was the cutest thing. But can you imagine sending that out to thousands of people? It made an impact on my thinking about the entrepreneurial program at that school, and other than that, I knew nothing about that school, so I actually went and checked it out, Dean of Icon.

Unfortunately for the clever school that sent the creative “sweat equity in a jar” after the dean’s research he made the determination that the school was over-ranking itself, “so it really didn’t help me in terms of changing my view of the school’s quality.”

In the previous chapter, deans mentioned the importance of top faculty members and research in influencing perceptions of quality in business schools. A number of deans referred to a very clever approach to announcing faculty at a school. In this case, the announcement about the faculty came from a highly ranked school and the approach was very unique. A number of deans mentioned the approach and the school by name. A set of all star cards were sent in a package resembling baseball cards. Key faculty members were portrayed as all stars based on awards and prestige with their photos on the front of the cards and their stats on the back. New hires were featured as rookie cards; alumni as hall of famers, the new building as the stadium card and the dean as the skipper card. Associate Dean of Mascot recalled, “My favorite ones, were like baseball cards.”

Memorable schools that are distinctive and create experiences for stakeholders through case competitions, thought leadership, and state of the art facilities are positioning themselves most effectively for building long standing reputations. Direct marketing is hit and miss with most deans. Clever

marketing that will elicit attention is best sent from schools that are deserving of recognition as deans may actually research the faculty and characteristics of the school.

Many deans preferred the “cream rises to the top approach” and spoke about putting their resources in to initiatives to benefit students.

We just want to do what we do well. And we think that rankings will follow. And that’s not always the case. You can invest in moving up, but I think it’s a waste of resources. I’d rather use that money for something positive, for students and let the good results drive the rankings, Dean Icon.

Another dean spoke of going to the board of advisors and together agreeing that responsible resource allocation meant spending money on students and programs, reinforcing the school’s core mission, not influencing other deans.

Surprisingly, one school in my sample admitted to no marketing effort at all, “we are horrible, we are worse than horrible, our dean doesn’t buy into it, doesn’t want to spend money ... we have one person for... nice brochures, but doesn’t understand marketing or PR like that,” Associate Dean Fortune. The Dean of Fortune commented that “when you’ve been dean for 19 years then maybe you become immune to these things and don’t recognize pressure.”

Another undergraduate director mentioned no knowledge of specific strategies to promote the undergraduate program. “We have not been doing that, and I don’t know if we’ll ever get into the PR campaign that some schools have

because of “bling”. Basically, we don’t have “bling” to do it”, said associate dean, Windfall. However, a number of the marketing ideas identified earlier were mentioned by the dean of this same school. Perhaps the undergraduate associate dean overlooked that school wide PR does have an effect on the undergraduate program. The Dean of Windfall mentioned that, “while they do PR campaigns, compared to (school) they aren’t in the same game.” All of these statements are from state schools reporting that financial resources are the constraint in their PR efforts, “I know there are schools that do marketing and do some external campaigning, and these are the schools that I’ll get brochures from, but we haven’t done that here, probably primarily because of budgetary restriction as much as anything,” Dean Icon. The dean goes on to explain his external marketing is targeted at alumni, students, parents and potential donors. The perception of having resources seems to be a very important signal in an effective marketing and PR campaign. Even if the deans and associate deans don’t read the promotions the subconscious message is that the school has extra money for PR.

Celebrating Success (or not)

Because rankings fluctuate, there is a double edged sword in over emphasizing ranking results to internal and external stakeholders. The associate dean, Engage, told me that she spends a lot of time figuring out how to

communicate rankings without placing too much emphasis on it. This question gives interesting insight into the organizational culture of the school.

Organizational culture is defined as the beliefs, norms, values, heroes and rituals that contribute to the understanding of meaning in an organization (Clas 1970, 1998; Tierney, 1991; Shein, 2004). Ranking results are communicated through emails, websites and publications to alumni.

So we've got a lot of pitch men that put the spin on it. When they're good or when we improve we make a huge deal out of it. When they are what they are and they're the same or a little bit lower perhaps then they were we report them but we don't put as much - they don't get as much press, associate dean Fortune.

When asked why communicating the rankings is important the answer was that it provides a signal by an independent source and it's consistent with the school's view of quality. "We do in a large part what firms do, highlight the good news, candidly report objectively the not so good news but put a lot more weight and emphasis or draw a lot more attention to the goodness. So it's just strategic reporting," Associate Dean, Windfall. One associate dean is cautious of over-promoting ranking success, "we had an alumni event in NY and the first draft of the invitation that I got from the alumni director, said, come celebrate the BBA top (number) ranking with us. I crossed that out and did it differently," associate dean Engage. She had another story in which she carefully invited her students to follow the Business Week rankings on-line with a message about the true

qualities of the program and deemphasized the ranking. She reported that a colleague commented that it looked like she was planning a drop in the rankings. However, the truth was that the Business Week photo crew had already interviewed her and been to campus. “This is really important to not let this get away from us. Not to let this define us. That helped a lot, this year was declined in the rankings and I didn’t have a riot on my hands,” associate dean Engage. The dean of Mascot agreed, “people do look at it (rank); faculty looks at it, staff looks at it. I need to somehow communicate it without appearing as though my entire life, the reputation of the business school revolves around the ranking and nothing else.” It is easy to over emphasize successful rankings as they are simple and clean to communicate. However, as these deans caution, it is much better to publicize the qualities that drive the school’s reputation so that a school is not at the mercy of rankings that are derived to sell magazines.

As we’ve noticed from previous sections, one school in particular has decided not to feature rankings on their web-site and PR materials. They were the “no show” at the rankings beauty pageant. The Dean of Millionaire explains,

(the rankings) It is not the best scientific process, so I really try to direct my stakeholders to the following way of thinking. What are we trying to achieve at the school, how will we know if we’re achieving it, and our ultimate goal when I ask people what do you care about this place being and doing, they never say having a good reputation among other deans.

This quote symbolizes the tensions that deans feel about cross marketing during difficult economic times. We know that the dean of Millionaire seemed to have a banner year with a new building, new curriculum, and strong faculty and student recruitment yet the school dropped in the rankings. Consequently, the dean is making the case that doing the right thing is what should matter for the school's stakeholders.

In another example the rankings become the marketing strategy of one of the schools in the study, the same school that puts ranking the most prominently on their website so that it shows up in the Google search engine. The dean believes that Fortune School of Management should appear on all 100 or so ranking publications. He summarizes his school's scorecard in an annual document titled, *Building a Better Business School*, and said, "It's not exactly science whether we're 50 or 30, we'd like to be number one." He values ranking as a scorecard of success and shares the annual rankings at a number of faculty meetings. He commented that of all the rankings, the ones that held the most importance to him were those that ranked the faculty. He said, "a lot of it we market, is to our own faculty. That's a big part of one of the major stakeholders here." Dean Fortune. This is an interesting finding, that in an effort to retain faculty in a very competitive market the announcement of key faculty and valuing reputation is an important signal of strength in a business school.

Faculty generally want to belong to a successful business school that is climbing in the rankings. Perhaps this is why the business school that sent faculty baseball cards made such a hit with other academics. Everyone wants to play on a winning team.

The Beautiful Outlier

The “teacher’s pet” phenomenon is a challenging outcome of effective promotions and successful rankings in some schools. Excellent, highly ranked specialties within schools can cause friction with the other basic foundations of the business school. The associate dean of Windfall explains, “if our international program was ranked really high we’ll play that up but internally it’s a great program but we don’t think of that as our strongest program, it just happens to be one of the ones that is most highly rated. Our entrepreneurship is another example of that.” Attention on small specialized areas while favorable to external stakeholders can pose resource conflicts and can overshadow the units that are the most fundamental in the knowledge creation in business schools. Developing distinction while carefully supporting the fundamental disciplines of a school becomes a difficult balancing act for a dean.

Being Self-Centered Can Back Fire: Too Much Promotion Can Hurt You

Too much promotion can hurt a school as throughout my interviews when I asked about reactions to direct marketing a couple of schools were mentioned as “over-the-top” and became annoying to the *USNWR* “judges”.

The school that is the number one in my inbox is (school), they just over the years have spent a fortune on this stuff. I don’t think it has affected me ... does it affect the ranking when we fill out the forms, I don’t think so ... singular in their doggedly pursuit of us, that if anything it might hurt them ... I think that someone that is so far removed from everyone else in such blatantly obvious attempt to change their score if anything I might be biased, prejudiced against them. (Associate Dean, Millionaire).

About the same school, the Associate Dean of Engage, “when everyone was making fun of (school), we are pretty sure that blanketing of PR materials have little to no impact.” The Dean of Fortune mentioned another school by name in which he admitted would never have been on his radar. However, the volume of marketing caught his attention for serious consideration. Upon inspection of the material he found he was less than impressed and of the 28 new hires they were announcing, his school would not have hired any of the people listed. One dean, particularly sour on efforts to lobby other deans for rankings reported receiving, “really quite blatant ‘when you fill out the *USNWR* survey be sure to consider that....’ I’ve never done it but one of these days I’ve actually thought of saving those and saying, oh, maybe, I should reduce my rating of those schools because they’re so awfully fraudulent,” Dean Millionaire. In a competitive

market, communication with peers has to be strategic and add value. Simply asking deans for their support is not an effective communication strategy.

Another common irritant to deans is the use of the word unique. A number of deans chafed at any school trying to tell others that they started a unique program, because usually a similar idea or program is in full implementation at another school. This is a quote based on hearing another dean's address at a conference,

(name of dean) had a huge ego or has a huge ego. I've heard him speak at AACSB conferences and sometimes he would make statements that weren't quite accurate ... we are the only school in the country doing something. Whenever deans use these words they'll get themselves in trouble. I can't think of anything in which "we are the only school" in the country that is doing it, Dean Millionaire.

Getting on the AACSB stage or in the consciousness of deans is seen as important in gradually influencing the brand perception. However, a steady approach is good, but an arrogant or misplaced effort can cause the opposite effect. There seems to be a marketing equilibrium in which schools should carefully stay positioned. Too much marketing can be detrimental.

The Magic of Taglines

The process of creating a brand message or tagline for a school is very controversial and dependent on the dean to approve it and carry it through into a real brand message. Since the average dean's tenure is short, the schools that

can have the most success in developing a pithy brand message and strategy are often schools that deans have a much longer tenure. In some cases, the dean's tenure and personality become the brand of the school, especially, if the dean is very active in professional association. In some ways, long seated and popular deans have the effect similar to "founder syndrome" in which rather than working toward a school's overall mission, the organization operates as a result of the personality of this prominent person in the organization (McLaughlin & Backlund, 2008). The subsequent dean has to carefully consider his/her unique opportunities without jeopardizing the brand momentum. In a school with a very well known dean that has just retired, the associate dean remarked, "with (previous dean) we did have a tagline. Yes, the tagline lasted about a minute, it was an invitation for the faculty to fight and boy did they. That just got nuked last year. We no longer have the tagline... Don't have a tagline that you have to explain," Associate Dean, Mascot. While the faculty may have found this particular school's tagline efforts unsatisfactory in describing their efforts, the school had begun to develop a brand identity around it as verified by another associate dean's comment, " we have no particular tagline, like I recall (Mascot) really focused on (specific tagline)." This is a significant compliment that a peer actually remembered the tagline of a school. In this research, many of the administrators failed to remember their own school's tagline. Mascot, the school

with the new dean has decided to begin the marketing research process again and rebuild their branding messages.

Many of the deans and associate deans confirmed the problem of developing a common brand message for their schools. Most reported the challenge of trying to find one over arching umbrella that could accurately characterize the diverse mission of the school. Most administrators in the sample admitted to “at one time” or “there used to be” a tagline, but more often told the stories of failed attempts by marketing teams or consultants to produce a pithy brand promise. One associate dean with a long tenure recited three different brand messages that she was familiar with. “We had tested one a couple of years ago and fell on its face a bit...(tagline)...trying to basically, very blatantly differentiate us from other schools ... I think the marketing folks ran that campaign or helped design it, you know kind of stretched that term a little bit. The use of (tagline), is almost impossible to find examples of,” Associate Dean Millionaire. Another associate dean told of a high ranking marketing individual hired from industry with really great credentials failing after two years to deliver a brand strategy, “it’s pathetic. All that money, and we had nothing,” Associate Dean Moonlight. The marketing challenge in a business school is far more difficult than one would imagine because of the diversity of the mission.

Some schools have been successful in agreeing on a specific brand message including tagline like “principle leadership for global enterprise”, “one school endless possibilities”, “Three I’s: Impact, Integration and Integrity”, “Think differently and make a difference”, “Nowhere but here”, which includes a general sample of some random top 50 business school taglines.

In terms of branding, regulating programs is like herding cats. Even with an approved brand message many program directors still report “doing their own marketing thing” with stakeholders they interact with, specifically students and parents.

The person who they brought in to rebrand the school a few years ago and be our marketing director, probably wished that I would get hit by a bus because every word about my program gets my approval first. This is one of the joys of working for an undergraduate program as opposed to an MBA program, because people don’t think the school’s reputation is riding on what you do, you get more degrees of freedom, which in turn, makes you a much better program, Associate Dean, Engage.

As demonstrated in this quote, marketing in MBA programs because of their competitive markets and significant tuition potential are carefully managed. Undergraduate programs are often state funded and seen as stable sources of revenue for a school. Consequently, most undergraduate marketing comes directly from the proud associate dean that believes in the program and wants to create a buzz for the stakeholders. Undergraduate promotion is often one of the first elements to be cut in a down budget year. This is one of the reasons that

associate deans are creative in developing a wide variety of methods to infiltrate the consciousness of peers.

Many schools reported difficulty in getting stakeholders to agree on a tag line, consequently they try involving as many stakeholders in the process as they can. During a focus group, one institution learned what was important to students and they also studied their student graduation speeches. The students raved about travel and having a variety of memorable experiences. The tagline was created from these heart- felt descriptions of what added value for the students. However, the Associate Dean, Impress, did say, “some faculty hate it, because it means nothing. Students like it, faculty think it’s stupid.” A more common method for tag line development included a consulting firm, marketing and communication team members along with a committee of faculty, staff and alums. “They came up with a brand development program, which I intervened a bit and modified,” Dean Windfall. The school that had the most fully integrated tagline and image when I researched their web site, described their success

It’s our story. It was taken from our stakeholders. ...there are a couple of ways you can do that. You can get a consultant to come in and say, “try this, that” but it actually came from the ground up, kind of grassroots. And it turned out that we really are basically integrity ...It’s kind of the Midwestern value proposition. Most... come from small towns, they worked on farms, they worked with cows or whatever, they were used to rolling their sleeves and they have a really good ethic about honesty... and the good thing that

we don't actually have to worry about it. We're doing what we said we're doing. That's the part I like about it, Dean Icon.

The pillars of emphasis approach rather than implementing a specific tagline was noted by three different schools. One school included integrity, innovation and impact. Another school noted globalization, sustainability and collaboration and the final school chose ethical behavior, pioneering entrepreneurial spirit and internal dimensions. Consequently, the "motherhood, baseball, and cherry pie" approach seems to dominate the taglines within business schools. It would be interesting to further examine the execution of these values within the program. The seemingly meaningless taglines often bother the rationality of the faculty, that if asked would simply state the schools should stand for academic excellence and high quality research.

Finally, a new dean articulated a unique approach to measuring stakeholder affinity to his brand. The Dean of Mascot explains, "we are having a series of events all around the greater (city) area, using a brand message, so, if people turn up for events, based on this program, instead of 'come to this program and you can get a degree', I think that may be one way to measure how effective we are in propagating a brand. But it is still a work in progress."

Overall, taglines or pillars of excellence are common ways to quickly identify and market schools. However, the tension between the different emphasis areas that the stakeholders value causes the branding exercise to be difficult to manage

and execute over time. Unlike for-profit businesses that manage to maintain brand images, logos and sayings over time, the diverse nature of business school stakeholders and the revolving dean in many business schools makes this kind of marketing effort a real challenge.

Tension with Your Sponsor

Another complication of the branding of business schools and academic programs, especially named schools is coordinating the brand with the greater university. Because the business schools teach marketing and brand positioning and generally do a thoughtful job of implementing marketing strategies they can become a dominant player within the greater university. This can become a double edged sword,

What I battle in terms of shaping the community issue is that there is real tension between our students at our school with the other undergraduates on campus. It's vicious we are not talking about gentle teasing, we have so many superior programmatic offerings compared to their college that there is a real resentment. Associate Dean Millionaire.

Business schools are often criticized by faculty and personnel in other colleges within a university for marketing efforts and over-zealous branding. However, these same critics don't understand the pressure that business school deans operate under. Many deans feel that business schools reside in comprehensive universities, but the competitive market place is with other

business schools. Constant attention is placed on staying ahead of other top business schools for the attention of students, recruiters, faculty, funders, etc.

Another example of a University brand tension includes the competition for business degrees from branch campuses associated with a given university. Business school administrators carefully craft their brand and manage their reputation, and then the university allows “lesser quality” branch campuses to compete with them,

(branch campus) is totally independent. Which is the ironic thing, right? We don't control their hiring, we don't really – you know, they might ask us our opinion about their curriculum but more likely or not they're just going to look and see their version of it or do whatever. You know, they're starting to launch an MBA program to compete with our MBA program. They're starting to offer undergraduate majors or concentrations like ours and we've got nothing to say about it. Long term strategy is to separate our brand from the rest of the university and be accredited separately and independently.

This is a very common problem with elite brands in a university. Elite is often characterized by limiting supply to a program in high demand. This situation develops the brand perception in the market place but frustrates the university as it seeks to maximize profits and provide open enrollment to all deserving students. Another challenge for the business school is that other colleges often capitalize on the demand from students in a school with a high quality business program with limited enrollment. As a result business-light classes crop up in many other colleges on a campus, from engineering to home

economics. Recently the AACSB has been taking a careful approach to these off-shoot business programs and has been holding the central administration to the same standards of excellence as the primary business school. In some schools, substandard off-shoot business programs can cause the university to lose its business accreditation. The tension between the university's mission and the elite nature of top programs is a significant issue for business school deans.

Integrated Marketing: Everything you do Matters

From these twenty interviews it became obvious that everyone in a business school is both a salesperson and a brand manager. Integrated marketing communication explains that every kind of communication is an interpreted feature of a brand (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). The Associate Dean of Millionaire summarizes this thinking,

In my view, quality is every kind of contact you have with the students and increasingly their parents and others important to them. Every interaction is a chance to either assist the student on their journey or to create a situation that reflects a lack of quality. We try very hard to be consistent and thoughtful and integrative in everything we do as we touch undergraduate students.

During my interviews with the 10 deans and 10 associate deans I questioned them about integrated marketing communication. Since most understood the concept, but didn't understand the specific strategies including: understanding broad communication functions in brand impact, event marketing, direct

marketing, feature promotion, customer service and brand messages other than marketing, I used a number of probes to illicit responses about the development of stakeholder relationship and brand awareness. All of the schools are practicing integrated marketing communication, they just may not know to call it that. Deans responded to my questions with examples from the co-curriculum, global efforts, social entrepreneurship, career services, academic advising, student community, conferences, alumni connections and responding to student needs. The last section of this chapter will take us full circle as the deans and associate deans illustrate the “brand promise” or the student experience in their undergraduate business programs. In our beauty pageant analogy, the programs the deans describe in this section are often the elements that combine to epitomize beauty, examples of this in a beauty pageant would be the hair, make-up, clothes, shoes and the “extras” that combine to make a successful contestant. In a sense the overall look, and poise of a contestant becomes her brand. This is also true of a business school, the brand experience is so much more than the classroom experience. This is an important section because faculty don’t always understand these “extras” or “enhancements”. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) described these new features within higher education as the result of academic capitalism; as higher education becomes more entrepreneurial and adopts practices familiar in market competition new services and new jobs become

necessary. Because of competitive markets, higher education has become a product and justifies branding, reputation, customer service and the common features of a market driven industry. Slaughter and Leslie (2004) also emphasize that today's students are more than learners; they are critical consumers that demand higher expectations from higher education.

Leadership and Practical Experience

In a business school there is a lot of competition for resources. The programs (MBA and undergraduate) often compete for attention and resources as do the core academic disciplines. The PHD and research programs are still another pillar of excellence and require significant funding. In many colleges the accounting department may be accredited separately as its own school, also in the competitive mix. These are the bread and butter of the student experience. However the co-curriculum becomes the "jam and jelly" and often unites the academic experience with the skills necessary for a bright professional future. The associate dean of Windfall explains,

About a third of the students' education comes in the classroom. About a third comes outside the classroom through clubs, groups, organizations, cases, traveling all that and about a third of it comes on their own. So we can control one third of it but the other two thirds we work pretty hard to improve.

He reports a lot of attention to leadership training, has a certificate program in leadership and emphasizes the importance of student organizations. The Dean of Millionaire expressed similar thinking,

And that doesn't always only mean book learning. It may be events ...where students get to demonstrate leadership- for example, we have a leadership lecture series that students organize. I think that's important to have because it allow the students to leadership experience of organizing with CEO's , exposes them to CEO's they don't see in other venues. We have a business plan competition. So things where students are learning either they're perfecting their classroom skills or they're learning skills that are really best learned outside the classroom, Dean Millionaire.

Another dean mentioned that at his school they sponsor award programs and ceremonies. When I asked why he answered, "recognition of the students, part of that is for us to get a telegraph to people about what we're trying to do," Dean Icon. Many of the administrators failed to understand the relationship between reputation and the co-curriculum of a business school when I first mentioned integrated marketing communication. However, almost every administrator mentioned the importance of services to students outside of the curriculum. Based on what we know about how reputation is formed and how important student satisfaction is as one of the inputs for brand development, these kinds of efforts can be very meaningful experiences for students and a good source of PR for the school.

Global Perspectives

Another feature identified by several study participants included global programs. This emphasis was also a feature in several of the taglines or pillars of focus. Participants reported that they like to send students abroad to study. Or another common global program consists of faculty leading a group of students to a global destination in conjunction with a class to showcase an international perspective on the material learned in class, “ they would be developed around a classroom concept and our student would literally go abroad and study and learn and meet people, talk to other students but also go to firms,” Associate Dean Windfall. We also know that developing international partnerships is a possible source of reputational capital as the global market place matures.

Another way to spotlight the activities of business schools and build affinity is through international conferences. Associate Dean, Mascot said, “we do a lot of event marketing, provide information, education, and service to our constituencies. We do that to be famous.” The associate dean went on to explain a partnership with the Thai Embassy in which they co-sponsored a conference. Along with the 60 participants, the program was taped and showcased the business school professors. The proceedings were placed on the business school’s website “to brag about how internationally connected we are....the conference allowed us to demonstrate that we are a player.” Schools that have

an early start in developing international relationships with schools and learners will have a leg up as the higher education landscape becomes more global. Increasingly, students are seeking high quality business education in markets all over the world.

A Respectable Career

In business schools and other professional schools, success of the students and program is often based on the quality of career placement. The faculty and support personnel create a culture aiming students for rewarding careers. The associate dean at Bliss commented, “we have a good placement rate. Of course, students are going to love our service if the results are good.” Another aspect of top notch career services includes the importance of developing relationships with recruiters, more than allowing them access to students. The recruiter relationship can add to stronger rankings, positive networking on behalf of a school, field projects and financial support. “We like to get companies here in our building because, then, hopefully, we can manage how they’re treated, and we can try to treat them well. And that’s part of an effort to try to make the recruiters feel comfortable and have a good experience when they come here, “ Associate Dean, Bright. In particular, within the Business Week rankings the employers grade the business schools. The employers are asked to grade the schools based on quality of students and innovative nature of the curriculum.

Developing solid relationships with employers are critical to the reputation of a school as these recruiters go out and talk to other administrators at other schools and provide additional financial support to schools that supply a steady stream of high performing employees.

Career service is more than career placement, it also includes development of students. Dean of Icon explained that many of his students come from high schools that graduate 20 students per year. Towns in his area average 800-1000 people. In order to prepare his students for large market job placements, experiential learning is important. "We put them through experiential learning, what they go through really prepares them to go to Chicago. We have a good network of students that they can draw from when they get there, so they feel connected," Dean Icon. One business school has become very well known for excellence in career services, the school has become a leader to the extent that almost every other program benchmarks their best practices. This leadership in placement adds to the brand of that business school. One of the participants in this study told me that personnel from the school took a trip out to school that is the industry leader in business school career services. Based on what they saw, the business school then converted a floor of their building to develop a quality program for their own students and employers. The dean commented, "that was a big thing that needed to be done to move up in the rankings," Dean Bright.

Career development and placement is important to students when selecting a school and to employers that become the ultimate consumers of a business school product.

Personal Attention and a Pleasing Attitude

One of the categories of the integrated marketing framework includes customer service. Many deans and associate deans put academic advising in the customer service category. This is an illustration of how advising has become a central function of service to undergraduate business students,

We did a survey and we got back some pretty unfortunate results. So with a lot of student feedback and student participation (we) went a long way to professionalizing what we were doing. There were even presentations to trustees. It was a pretty heavy duty proposal. Not only did it involve real estate, getting more space, but also hiring three full-time professional advisors. But the board approved it and we've done it, Associate Dean, Bliss.

This same administrator went on to compliment the director of academic advising and the advising professionals that have led to significant improvements in service to the students. The Dean of Mascot recognized that the advising office is the go-between for faculty and students sometimes on issues of ethics and performance. Associate Dean, Fortune reports responding to his customers by providing more user friendly practices, scheduling software, on-line services and variable hours in an attempt to be more customer friendly. One school reported a low enough advisor to student ratio so that they can

require mandatory advising and internships. The sense was that personal contact and a relationship with an advisor is a very critical part of developing high level educational programs. The associate dean of Windfall proudly said,

We have the world's greatest advisor group. They are absolutely wonderful, dedicated incredibly personable people who make the student the most important thing and they're just – they're sensitive and they're trained and they're good at what they do and when a student walks out of my office here after meeting with one of my advisors they've got a plan and they feel valued and important.

For deans who aspire to develop a long range approach to positive brand development, student services becomes an important aspect of the strategy to move away from transaction advising to relationship driven advising and programs. If a student feels connected to the school, even after graduation, he/she will be a more active alum and possible future benefactor. Reputation must be carefully managed throughout a number of integrated marketing approaches.

Congeniality and Community

The deans had many different responses to the questions about integrated marketing communication. For the most part, the associate deans thoroughly understood the concepts and easily answered the questions. Some of the more analytical deans were slower in their responses. However, all administrators eventually spoke to the importance of student community. A variety of methods

to develop student community were illustrated, including community service, class cabinets, business focused residence halls, leadership programs for sophomores, leadership academies, special interest affinity programs, etc. Here are some common examples of efforts that business school administrators referenced that they have implemented to develop community:

- Class cabinets
- Freshman course capped at 20 in a very large state university
- Second year program for top 100 sophomore prebusiness students
- Leadership Academy (70% freshman, 20% sophomores)
- Business specific Student Organizations
- Integrated core and cohort enrollment
- Employer focused student projects
- Freshman lecture series/ 'day in the life'
- Peer mentoring
- Professional workshops (investment banking; consulting, etc.)
- Team work in the core
- New building, designed for student community
- Induction ceremony for students and parents that enter the school
- Living learning center in a residence hall
- Student senate sponsors "meet the dean" evenings

The associate dean of Impress illustrated how important community is for students, "we have had (core) marriages, babies, I mean one or two. People spend day and night with somebody for two weeks, at the end of two weeks are really sad or mad at these people."

The Dean of Engage summarized community as a way to build culture. He watches the services closely (advising and career) and works with student

leadership who “have a lot of ownership over the program. They feel great pride in the program. The undergraduates are in my office all the time.”

In summary, I asked the participants why developing community is an important part of business school culture. Associate dean of Mascot commented, “those are the students that 20 years from now will give us money.” The dean of Icon said,

We call it ‘total engagement’ ... so we want to make them feel like they’re a part of the community for four years ... if they don’t have the affinity, then they’re not going to give back. We’re trying to teach them the benefit of giving back because the opportunities they’re afforded today are because people before them have given back.

The Dean of Moonlight responded that the budget situation of today calls for heightened student cohesiveness, community and direction. Fortunately a strong sense of community is attractive to students while in their undergraduate program, because the approach is simply a solid fundraising technique that will hopefully yield dedicated school supporters in the future.

Making and Keeping Good Friends

This is another topic in which my participants were prolific in their comments. There is a common belief that many research one institutions could establish better relationships with their alumni. Some have started to put more emphasis on building alumni networks. This was an area in which the private

schools indicated a very clear lead in relationship management. Bright Associate Dean talked about a .50 (half credit class in a series) in which 300-400 alumni volunteer as mentors for students. Undergrads in the course complete assignments and can find a mentor geographically, by company or industry. The only negative is that the alumni request more regular contact with the students as they are eager to provide help as the students graduate. Unfortunately, busy students tend not to take full advantage of the mentor relationship. Another school, Engage, takes their students to New York City twice per year to visit alumni and recruiters. They also have a Face Book page and the Associate Dean reports 1500 contacts, mostly alumni. She reports that her alumni network is used to open opportunities for internships and full time placements. However, this is a personal page and regular “friendly” contacts are maintained between the Associate Dean and her alumni friends. The deans generally meet with alumni from all over the world and report emphasis on alumni magazines and web-based communication. Many of the deans I spoke with made choices about resources in their answers,

The events that I think are important to save are events that build affinity ... in an alumni event connecting with other alumni that's valuable. Sometimes it's learning something new that's valuable. So events that build positive affinity and provide a value I think are important to keep. I think its self evident that when you rely on an alum for a variety of contributions monetary and non-monetary especially in down times you don't want to be damaging that affinity for now and the future, dean, Millionaire.

This dean is thinking about creating relationships that will last and will help future deans of the school. Another creative alumni networking solution was summarized as a speed interviewing program in which students come together and network with alumni via the web. They also have ambassadors in their alumni network that host events. The dean of Moonlight spoke about Facebook, Linked In, and resources to develop an alumni database, “if we can be a little bit visionary, with Facebook and other things, then the deans in twenty years will have it so much easier, but who knows if we’ll be able to keep up with the technology.”

One of the tensions that business school deans have is in staffing alumni positions. Often large universities have central alumni associations. Many of the state deans indicated that they leave the alumni relationships to the central alumni association and development offices. However, this strategy is substandard to the private schools that work to develop alumni loyalty and affinity the day students matriculate and through the development of more intimate college communities. More public schools are seeing the value of creating life-long affiliations with alumni rather than previous public education practices in which education was seen by students as a transaction. State schools continue to

have a lot to learn from elite private schools in the marketing communication area pertaining to relationship building and maintenance.

Asking for Feedback and Making Improvements

Finally and closing the loop on integrated marketing communication administrators reported their strategies for responding to their customers' needs. To be fair, not all participants view the students as customers, Associate Dean of Windfall made it clear that he views students as the "raw material inputs" and the employers as the customer. Nevertheless, examples of understanding student perspectives include informal feedback, formal feedback collected at graduation, analysis of graduation rates and other indicators, recruiter surveys, etc. According to Associate Dean, Windfall, "One of the reasons to teach a sophomore level class is because students have changed and I want to hear what they talk about. I think if I'm more sensitive to them I can help craft or construct a better program to respond to their needs." Some associate deans admit to only engaging a percentage of their students and are actively working to increase this number, "I bet we all struggle with this because that is part of making your message real. We are trying to figure out how to engage the unengaged, we think we have 900 engaged students and 2000 others," Associate Dean Mascot. An important strategy is to both survey the students and address their concerns and point out our improvements we've made as a result of feedback, "I guess,

it's a part of a campaign to try to improve overall students' satisfaction, which we should be doing anyhow," Associate Dean, Icon.

Identifying common problems within a business school and solving them makes for satisfied students and a good story to share with peers. Chances are good that one business school's problems are applicable to many and a good solution may set a school up for some effective PR. Being a leader in innovative solutions to common problems in a business school gets attention.

Managing a Strong Support Group

All of these special engagement programs for students and alumni are impressive, but they create the need for more staff, just as Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) predicted in their academic capitalism, interstitial organization theory, in which jobs are created in marketing, PR and development offices as education becomes more like a for-profit market place. The Dean of Fortune, really the most conservative in his belief in marketing and alumni outreach claims he has 1.2 staff per faculty at his school and they are primarily in the programs. He says, "We'd like to add more staff because our view is, that's where the rubber meets the road." The Associate Dean of Fortune is constantly adjusting how people are organized, including switching from the title of academic advisors to the title of career coaches. The dean of Future may value the staff in his school because he senses the delivery of his curriculum in very large sections may not

provide the relationship anchor that might occur in schools with much smaller class sizes. Staff members are easier to recruit and afford than high priced faculty.

I asked everyone in the study about their market communication teams. The range varied from one person at a school that does virtually no marketing because they are the number one school in their state for top students to enroll to a school that is a more significant investor in marketing. The latter school's group is called Strategic Communications and it has three main areas including school relations including media outreach and writing; a production group that produces centralized marketing and a web team. All told this accounts for approximately 10 positions in marketing for that school.

True to the belief that new organizations will appear because of more entrepreneurial activities in higher education, the dean at Engage reports the use of a public relations firm that activity markets the faculty.

Board of Advisors Support

In general the deans shared that their corporate advisory board were very supportive of marketing efforts. The answers to this question ranged from the board doesn't get involved in this level of detail to the dean strategically works with a 180 person board to develop and implement PR initiatives including publishing a book given to key stakeholder on ethics (Bright). In most cases,

because business school boards are made up of people that understand sales and marketing, “no justification is necessary”, associate dean Windfall reported. “I’ve got people on my board from General Mills, Target, Best Buy, compared to their advertising intensity ours is laughingly low,” Dean, Millionaire. As a result of this corporate influence, business schools have come to adopt market approaches to running their enterprises including the adoption of marketing communication techniques.

Another dean acknowledged that faculty might complain about the personnel and expense that goes into marketing, however, “there is a countervailing force that the faculty are proud to be a part of a school that is well known and in the news and getting out there in the community and country. So I’m not hearing about that, you know, occasionally someone says something,” Dean Impress. In another example of this double edged sword effect of marketing, Associate Dean, Impress commented, “faculty think it is a sheer waste of money. They wonder why we do these things. At the same time they will complain a lot if somebody sees the research faculty from other school and they’ll ask, how come you are not letting my colleagues know that I am a great guy?” When resources are flowing marketing communication can go a long way to inform and satisfy stakeholders. When times are financially lean, deans have to make difficult choices and must remember that much of what marketing communication accomplishes is to

develop long lasting impressions about reputation. Further the strategies often pay out in the long run, when the dean making the decisions now will probably not be the dean that reaps the rewards. Those with the most long range perspective or passion for the business school should ensure that marketing communication survives in difficult times.

Measuring Integrated Marketing Success

My final question was about measuring market success, given the resources needed to market effectively. One Associate Dean, Windfall characterized his boss, "(name) has two things he preaches routinely, one you can't manage what you don't measure, and so consistently we are taking measurements. We developed this things we call a "dash board" internally." The dashboard includes goals and results are used annually with faculty and other stakeholders. Most of the administrators admitted the difficulty in measuring effectiveness given the volume of different marketing approaches. Quotes included, "I'm not sure they do it very well," Associate Dean Millionaire and "I know they've thought about how to measure success and the only thing we've done is survey alums to see whether or not our message resonates with them, but that's an area we're not so good at," Associate Dean, Icon. Still another told me that success is measured by the quality and size of the incoming student body and this was a common answer including, "we have to turn away a lot of students," Dean

Impress. Electronic publications make it easier to count hits when someone clicks on articles. Moonlight says, 'when we look at the number of hits, we get on the links for different articles, we kind of know what different groups of people are interested in. So we keep refining that type of article and do more of them.'" The deans are interested in measuring marketing success but no one has perfected this art according to the administrators I spoke to.

Summary

In this section we've explored how schools leverage integrated marketing to influence the perception of their undergraduate programs and business school brands. Deans have come to accept that cross marketing may influence perception if the marketing is targeted properly and shares practices that are of interest to peers. Too much marketing may actually hurt a school's reputation and signal less about quality and more about an over eager strategy to move up in the rankings. Integrated marketing communication means that everything an administrator does sends a message. Increasingly, brand influence is more than direct marketing. Strategies include conferences, research of interest to other deans, and networking functions that help spread messages to recruiters and corporate people about the quality of a given school. Brand and reputation is a function of a series of perceptions developed over time. One of the most important findings from this section is that in the face of declining budgets, an

effective steward of reputation works to save integrated marketing strategies that might include alumni connections, student engagement strategies, strong student communities and dedicated corporate advisory boards. Successful marketing communication signals that a school has resources, good ideas or good people. These are the building blocks of a school's academic reputation with peers.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

“The Miss America Organization's office - 5,000 square feet in a modest building owned by a bank - belies the size and fame of the pageant. The reception area looks like a doctor's office. That suits officials of the organization just fine. For years they have labored against the perception that the pageant is a mere beauty contest. And since Mr. Horn took over, the effort has intensified to promote the pageant's education scholarships and highlight the contestants' backgrounds, goals, and beliefs.”
(Behind the Scenes at the Miss America Pageant.. Kurtz, 1990).

The competition is held every April as U.S. undergraduate business programs line up to earn a slot on the *USNWR*'s annual Best Undergraduate Business Programs ranking. The country's oldest ranking of this kind, the contestants are rather stable with the majority of the schools also members of the prestigious AAU at large research universities. While it is difficult to find any academic administrator that will admit to the pleasure of the competition the impact of the outcome of the ranking is significant to students, parents, faculty, donors, corporate employers and their own University.

The “contest” in this study is the *USNWR* ranking that is entirely based on perceptions of the 42% (2010) of the Deans and Associate Deans from AACSB business schools that returned their ranking ballots. Because this ranking includes no “scientific data” or methodology that can be easily replicated most administrators discount the process as a popularity or beauty contest.

During this chapter, the findings of this study are summarized in the context of the research questions which include a baseline of how academic quality is defined, how administrators are influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools, how administrators complete the *USNWR* annual ranking ballot and methods the administrators utilize to influence brand perception. Next, I will explain how theoretical frameworks interact with the findings and introduce a model explaining the interactions of my findings in building a strong undergraduate business program reputation. I will close with an overall conclusion about the peer assessment methodology, and a discussion of the research findings as implications for practice, and for future research. Overall, the findings provide direction to business school leaders that are interested in improving or stewarding a good reputation or strong brand for their school and undergraduate programs.

Baseline of Quality in an Undergraduate Program

Quality was emphasized differently between deans and associate deans. Deans, responsible for a big picture view of their business schools put most emphasis on the quality of faculty and their research. Associate deans put most emphasis on the quality of the student experience.

The deans agreed that input (high quality students and faculty), throughput (high quality curriculum, student engagement, support systems, experiential education) and output (career placement and progression) describe academic quality. Resources were rarely mentioned directly, however, deans made assumptions about resources based on new hiring and the quality of faculty schools were recruiting. The deans emphasized the dimensions that were easy to measure when considering quality of their own schools and in other schools. The deans did not reference the transformational nature of curriculum. Their definitions relative to student quality were related to input criteria. Unfortunately, teaching quality was rarely mentioned as well.

In contrast, the associate deans often manage the undergraduate program which means they are responsible for the vision and oversight of the details of the student experience. Often, the associate deans sell the value of the program to prospective parents and students, and are constantly articulating what they believe is the strategic advantage to a student of their particular program. While the associate deans mentioned the same overall indicators of quality as the deans, the quality of the student experience (engagement, leadership, student organizations, community) was most emphasized. There may be several reasons for this emphasis on the co-curriculum. Teaching in an undergraduate program may be somewhat variable as the MBA and PhD programs in a research

intensive business school often draw most of the research faculty members. Consequently, the undergraduate program usually features a higher proportion of graduate students, lecturers, clinical professors, and adjuncts. Another reason the associate deans may mention the student experience as an important indicator of quality is that business education is professionalized and regulated by AACSB. The undergraduate programs look very similar as curriculum is standard and many of the same text books and teaching methods are used across schools. Because the associate deans know many undergraduates, regularly interact with employers, and other stakeholders they may be more attuned to the transformational nature of their programs. They also pay more attention to innovative ideas in student engagement from colleagues at other schools.

Relative to the *USNWR* rankings, the different perspectives of the deans and associate deans that both participate in the April peer review illustrates that both have a different evaluation system relative to their definition of quality. The deans have the reputation of a school in mind relative to the quality of faculty and research. The associate deans are attuned to the student experience.

How Administrators are Influenced when Evaluating Reputation

Administrators shared that they are influenced by a number of factors when completing the *USNWR* rankings. The influences include the quality of faculty

and research, external influences (magazines, employers, benchmarking, sport team reputations, previous work experience, etc.), brand characteristics (quality of the MBA, resource changes, leadership, magnet schools, etc.), student focused influences, professional and AACSB influences and social networks.

The quality of faculty and research were frequently mentioned by the deans in the study as a gage for determining school quality. Deans received their information about faculty primarily from many years of recruiting faculty to their schools or departments. Business school faculty recruiting is competitive. Consequently, deans closely watch which schools are luring their faculty away and from which schools they can recruit junior and senior faculty members. In addition, faculty bring their experiences from other business schools and share best practices with curriculum committees, etc. Deans are influenced by their perceptions of quality from personal interaction with faculty members. Other more typical examples that influence the deans' perception of faculty quality included research in major journals, information from review boards, conferences, opinions in news articles, participating on national committees within their disciplines, and applicability of research to the business profession. The point was consistently made that quality of the faculty is easy to judge, but quality of teaching is very difficult to know.

In professional schools with standards, accreditation, norms, and meetings, administrators have many ways of obtaining information from and about their peers. External information seems to originate from national magazines, benchmarking, what employers share, previous work experience, previous education experience, sport team reputations, and what students say about other business schools. Increasingly, the Business Week rankings, with more transparent data are scrupulously examined and are beginning to influence administrators about other schools. In some cases, administrators are developing negative perceptions of schools that they believe provide false information to the Business Week rankings. Almost every administrator shared a story of benchmarking competitors or conducting surveys to learn best practices relative to an area of importance in their business school. Corporate employers are thought of as the customers of business schools. Because corporate recruiters travel around the country during the hiring season, they are constantly providing feedback to administrators about the quality of students at a particular school. Ultimately the hiring and promotion of a school's graduates becomes an important indicator of excellence and deans often know the other schools their students are competing against to land top jobs. Another factor that enters the subconscious of administrators is their previous knowledge of a school and this often comes from either being a student or working at another institution. The

administrators seemed to fondly remember their degree institutions with the opposite true for previous employers. Marketing, materials from other schools with relevant best practices, AACSB publications and national magazines were reported as providing influence. Finally, minor influences included the reputation of sports teams and what friends and family said about a school.

Brand is defined as the “internalized sum of all the impressions received resulting in a distinctive position in the consumer’s mind’s eye” (Knapp, 2000). There are a lot of perceptions relative to a school that forms a brand. These included the perception of quality based on the MBA program ranking of a school. Many deans admit to the MBA program as the flagship of the school, the program that is designed to transmit brand quality. This does have an effect on the undergraduate rankings, most believe. The biggest loser for this finding is the undergraduate student that believes the reputation of a top MBA program will affect the experience he/she has in the undergraduate program. When two very large business programs compete for resources and faculty time in a school, the undergraduate program usually loses. A large MBA program can actually negatively affect the quality of the undergraduate experience at those schools. The quality of the university and the strength of the brand of AAU institutions seems to be significant as well. Administrators also mentioned that the size and prestige of a business school’s PhD program helped influence their perception of

quality. Large PhD programs produce more faculty that interact with deans during the recruitment process and the successful graduates become deans that vote in the USNWR ranking. Another characteristic of a school that enters the subconscious of a dean is the size. Schools that are elite and small and schools that are very large with large faculty size make the biggest impact on the perception of the administrators. Finally, schools serving niche markets were called magnet schools. There was a perception that magnet schools attracted top students in that niche market and resulted in top rankings. Finally, the halo effect of a prominent researcher affected administrators when considering the quality of a school. Deans noted that reputation is slow to develop and very slow to erode.

Undergraduate programs have active student communities. Within the past five years schools have innovated by hosting student competitions, leadership programs, and conferences. The administrators admitted that they are paying attention to the national student competitions and they care about how their own students are competing on the national stage. These kinds of student engagement and competitive programs are surprisingly important to administrators. Students also bring back ideas from other schools, as perceptions are shared based on students getting out and visiting other campuses.

Every dean mentioned the importance of interacting with AACSB. The most common form of involvement included participating in affinity group meetings or serving on accreditation review teams. Deans have inside information about schools in which they serve on accreditation and reaccreditation committees and this often influences ranking decisions. In addition AACSB produces data about accredited business schools that is routinely shared across member institutions. Finally, for very active deans in AACSB, they leveraged their national exposure as a very valuable PR strategy. The value of attending national meetings, serving on accreditation teams and participating in AACSB meetings seems to increase the brand perception of a school and helps develop reputational capital.

Finally, the overall most important influence in the mind's eye of the administrators is from social networks, the people they know. From professional affiliations in research groups, undergraduate and graduate training, NUBS (National Undergraduate Business School Symposium), AACSB leadership and accreditation visits, attendance at conferences, and employment in a number of schools combine to form strong social networks that ultimately create the most powerful influence on reputation. The length of an administrator's career also affects the reputation or brand perception of their school by peers. Associate deans tend to have a longer career than deans. Business school deans average between five-six years as the leader of a business school. Consequently, the

anomaly of a long standing dean, creates consistency of mission and influence in professional networks. Long tenure of active associate deans and deans add reputational value to a school.

How Administrators Complete the Ranking Ballot

The research question, are competitors treated differently when evaluating academic reputation, was a non-threatening approach to better understand the process of down ranking or other behaviors that are purposely intended to influence a top ranking of a particular school in the USNWR ballot. While some deans (not all) mentioned competition or very crowded educational markets in their regions, few admitted to strategically down ranking top institutions. Most deans shared ethical practices and reported only suspecting or guessing about down ranking or other unethical practices. Associate deans reported that they were influenced by the importance that their deans placed on rankings. One associate dean had evidence that his predecessor might have ranked schools in USNWR based on ranking strategies rather than perception of quality. Deans reported being influenced by the importance University presidents, boards and other external stakeholders place on climbing in the rankings. This resulted in creative efforts to influence brand perception and may have influenced decisions when completing the *USNWR* ballot. Most deans admitted to knowledge of only 20-50 schools on the ballot. One very seasoned dean had a thorough rubric and

shared his AAU method of top ranking schools. At the back of the *USNWR* undergraduate ranking, academic departments are ranked. Some administrators told of “horse trading” in which programs traded votes for top programs in their schools. These were the kinds of stories that were told relative to “previous institutions”. Some administrators admitted that they just know more about close competitors, the good, bad, and ugly aspects of rival schools as an explanation for down ranking. Most importantly, the deans report that their intention to climb in the *USNWR* rankings makes them more active participants in business school networks and conferences. There seems to be great interest in the race for innovative best practices and for sharing them as a way to broadcast reputation. While down ranking is speculated there were few instances of proof. Most deans reported that they desire to impact the reputation of their school through sharing the quality of their programs with others.

Methods and Outcomes of Integrated Marketing Communication

Deans have come to accept that cross marketing may influence perception if the marketing is targeted properly and shares practices that are of interest to peers. Too much marketing may actually hurt a school’s reputation and signal less about quality and more about an over eager strategy to move up in the rankings. Most direct marketing (brochures, gadgets, etc.) intrigued the deans but the school was overshadowed by the creativity of the product. At best, the

deans made a mental note that these schools seemed to have resources, but rarely could remember the names of the schools that sent the items. In some cases, the items were very intriguing and deans researched the school and found that they were “stretching their reputation for excellence”, this ultimately hurt the school in the rankings.

Integrated marketing communication is a framework that emphasizes that everything an administrator does sends a message. Increasingly, brand influence is more than direct marketing. Strategies to improve brand capital include attending and hosting conferences, sending research of interest to other deans, and developing networking functions that help spread messages to recruiters and corporate people about the quality of a given school. A school’s brand and reputation is a function of a series of perceptions developed over time. One of the most important findings from this section is that in the face of declining budgets, an effective steward of reputation works to save integrated marketing strategies that might include alumni connections, student engagement strategies, strong student communities and dedicated corporate advisory boards. Successful marketing communication signals that a school has resources, good ideas and good people. Stakeholders that are treated well are good brand stewards, this includes employers, students, alumni, parents and others.

Findings Regarding Grounded Theories

Resource Dependency

As suggested by the theory of resource dependency (Tolbert, 1985; Slaughter & Leslie, 1999) business schools, hungry for resources have become entrepreneurial. Because of the stress on the US economy at the time of this study it was common that deans were preparing to make decisions about cuts in their programs. As Poovey (2001) points out there is an increasing cost to institutions as they become part of a more aggressive and competitive market place, including relying on reputation, perception of prestige and pleasing stakeholders critical for financial support. It is clear from the participants in this study that they are following resource dependency theory and have taken academic quality well beyond the tradition inputs (faculty and students) and graduation rate outputs. The academic process "throughput" is being taken far more seriously and includes such things as community, extra-curricular activities, and growing academic advising offices. As the deans and associate deans demonstrated in this sample, activities involving developing relationships with stakeholders are mission central including alumni outreach, student engagement and alumni initiatives like "management societies", etc. The primary reason for these academic extras seems to stem from the deans' desires

to build relationships for the future and they admitted an overall financial strategy.

Marketing strategies and the variety of methods the deans and administrators have either implemented or have experienced are examples of how important reputation and rankings have become. Prestige maximizing (Weiner 1986; Fairweather 1988; Winston 1997) became evident as deans outlined tactics they are familiar with to influence other administrators including attending conferences and creating regional communities with a diverse group of schools.

One school reported an impressive staff to student ratio that far exceeds the faculty to student ratio with a commitment to hire more non-academic professionals to serve students. He even used the phrase these people “are where rubber meets the road.” Another program employs 10 professionals in their Strategic Communication area. Twenty years ago these positions may not have existed, nor would the new buildings built with “community in mind”. Another surprising “between the lines” finding from a school had to do with a promise from a donor and almost “holding the school hostage” as the bequeathed assets have plummeted. The school desires to remain loyal to the donor but has almost taken a vow of “poverty” as they stand by the donor during difficult times.

Academic Capitalism

The findings and quotes from the deans revolved around brand and branding strategies. The obvious part of this study related to competition and a heightened consumer consciousness in what is expected from business education. A term new circuits of knowledge (Slaughter & Rhoads, 2004) describes how outside evaluators judge academic performance and signal quality for stakeholders. These outside organizations (magazines) profit from the rankings. AACSB, the international accrediting agency for business schools is also profiting from membership, accreditation, and conferences.

Academic advisors becoming career coaches, and people hired to teach “case competition classes” are examples of the emergence of managerial capacity and interstitial organizations defined as units complimentary to the marketing and entrepreneurial efforts of the college.

I was interested to learn of other entrepreneurial strategies reported by the deans, which included creating stand alone schools for branding purposes, and new specialized masters programs to serve students that enter with significant AP units to prevent them from graduating early. Market competition from one’s own university and the tension of branch campuses was not central to the study but an interesting example as a worried associate dean talked about protecting his elite brand.

Most important in this paper is the better understanding of the effect of the myriad of marketing approaches that deans receive as a function of cross marketing. Influence, from direct and indirect sources is very important in forming “mind’s eye” perceptions. The interview findings reinforced that everything an administrator does has an effect on his/her brand strength.

Professionalism and Institutional Theory

AACSB plays a major role in developing business school standards and the organization provides a forum for marketing, in the form of conferences and publications. Active participation in AACSB and a long dean tenure could substitute for other kinds of cross marketing. The importance of professionalism was evident as the deans and associate deans often referred to their own academic background (specialty area) as well as standards of their own schools and AACSB.

One dean worried, that AACSB standards caused mediocrity by “converging to a mediocre common point”, Dean Bliss. This is an example of institutional isomorphism in that schools start to resemble one another. In learning of the specifics of school tag lines, it is clear that most are using the same common themes, including entrepreneurship, ethics, social responsibility, etc. Another associate dean shared the perception that strict assurance of learning standards

became “make-work” instead of allowing unique measurement that added value to his students and his school.

Another dean voiced the opinion that elite highly ranked schools become more important than the governing body and “AACSB would look like fools” if they failed to reaccredit highly visible, respected schools. There is a general feeling that the AACSB suffers from “one size fits all” syndrome.

Administrators from both teaching institutions and research institutions were a part of the sample in this study. All of the administrators regardless of their mission of their institutions were eager to develop a top reputation. This was demonstrated through answers to questions about how they were positioning their schools and how they acquired knowledge of other schools. Because faculty reputation is a significant driver of academic reputation the schools compete for talent regardless of their specific academic mission. This reinforces Jencks and Reisman’s (1968) notion of institutional theory, professionalism and institutional isomorphism in that the drive for success in national rankings are causing schools to recruit the same faculty members and implement programs that will get them national attention. The down side of this kind of behavior, as schools look to micromanage their ranking performance is that we might be losing the necessary diversity within undergraduate programs to serve the needs of diverse students. In particular, higher education scholars worry about the

negative effects rankings have on access for diverse learners as input data (test scores, grades, etc.) are significant elements of prestige and reputation.

As a business school administrator myself, I was very familiar with the conversations I had with others in my profession around the country. Situations, challenges, and influences were the same and illustrated institutional theory as it did seem that we were united “in a web of values, norms, rules, beliefs and assumptions of our own making” (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 93). However, diversity in approach and mission seemed to be negatively influenced by our quest for top rankings and national prestige. We are dangerously close to looking too much alike and being over-regulated as described by a number of comments about AACSB.

Symbolic Interactionism

The beauty pageant metaphor worked perfectly to describe the process of preparing a brand for national competition. The concept of “congeniality” and popularity became very poignant as social networks appeared the dominant kind of influence on perception of quality. The definition of social networks or symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) has held true over time that people obtain information and make decisions based in response to one another. Professionalism and leadership in AACSB or membership in NUBS helped form social networks. Trust is a word that was used frequently to describe the value

of relationships from social networks. The administrators “trusted” their friends and colleagues whom they had come to know personally and professionally.

Most social networks are obvious, but I was intrigued to learn about the wide variety of possibilities that can affect brand perception, including receiving anecdotal information from family friends, sons and daughters attending a different school, brothers in higher education leadership, student competitions, information from PhD students on the job market, etc. Social networks have significant impact when hiring for a prestigious dean role. For a while the trend was to hire non-academic deans. Without the strong academic social network, a school might be advised to think twice with respect to a non-academic dean’s ability to gain credibility with faculty and peers while raising the awareness of research excellence at the institution. From my research it appears that when administrators have strong social networks, knowing and trusting colleagues at other institutions helps cut through the marketing “noise” that is prolific. It is the value of these networks and regular interactions with faculty friends and colleagues that may help save an institution money on more traditional marketing campaigns including direct mail, sending magazines to peers, etc.

Organizational Culture and Other Social Science Theories

The administrators interviewed often used the term “culture” as they described building “a sense of community” within their business schools.

Practices to influence culture included student cohorts, orientation programs, recognition ceremonies, leadership programs and thoughtful development of new buildings to promote a culture of collaboration. Because the deans are leaders of their organizations it became evident how their influence impacted the associate deans and the overarching goals of their schools.

A theory in social psychology called founder's syndrome (McLaughlin, 2008) was an unexpected finding of this study as it describes the reliance of an organization on a very strong "founder" or long-time leader. In the list of 20 participants in this study, over half had been employed in their positions over ten years. The founder's syndrome is concerned with the organization becoming defined by a strong leader and not the driving mission of the organization itself. This theory is often used in a non-profit organization in which an individual might have started the organization from 'nothing' and built the organization and its brand over time. Because the average dean tenure is approximately six years, those that have a long tenure gain significant advantage and power with stakeholders and in the professional organizations. The long tenured deans and associate deans almost become the "brand" and have significant influence of the brand perception.

Halo effect is a term that describes unconscious decisions a consumer makes about a brand based on an unrelated interaction or perception of the brand. This

is often illustrated in retail by designer brands. In this study the halo effect was cited as elite brands (Harvard, Wharton, Michigan, Berkley) were assumed to be top schools. Only one dean, out of the sample, that has worked at these schools provided evidence and first-hand knowledge warranting his top rankings. A number of other deans and associate deans mentioned that they would automatically score these schools high in rankings even without direct knowledge or interaction with them because of their reputation within the industry.

Halo effect came up again in the discussion of brand strength between the MBA and the undergraduate rankings. Most believe the MBA rankings provide the overarching umbrella and set the reputation of a business school. In some cases top MBA rankings are believed to provide a halo over the undergraduate program as well. This is evidenced even in the US News top undergraduate business schools list when schools that don't have undergraduate programs get ranked. Most of the sample did not believe that a top ranked undergraduate program can wield the same halo effect over a second tier MBA program.

Integrated Marketing Communication

The conclusion from investigating dean and associate deans' efforts differentiating their brand and creating a unique business school experience is that everyone in a business school has two very important roles, sales and brand

management. Throughout the interviews with questions and answers about brand impact, event marketing, direct marketing, feature promotion, customer service and brand messages other than marketing, it became clear that business schools offer far more beyond “book learning”. True to this theory (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998) everything an administrator does matters as gold standards in business education have moved to relationship driven strategies that are investments for the future.

Implications of Research

Competing to Win in the USNWR Ranking Game

In a previous study by Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) that aggregated one year’s worth of reputational ratings in USNWR graduate programs the analysis confirmed the relationship between USNWR reputation ratings and the indicators of enrollment size, admissions test scores, and faculty publications. The origin of the prestige model (Volkwein and Sweitzer, 2006) was based on regression models for predicting the USNWR reputation score for 242 public and private research universities and 205 liberal arts colleges.

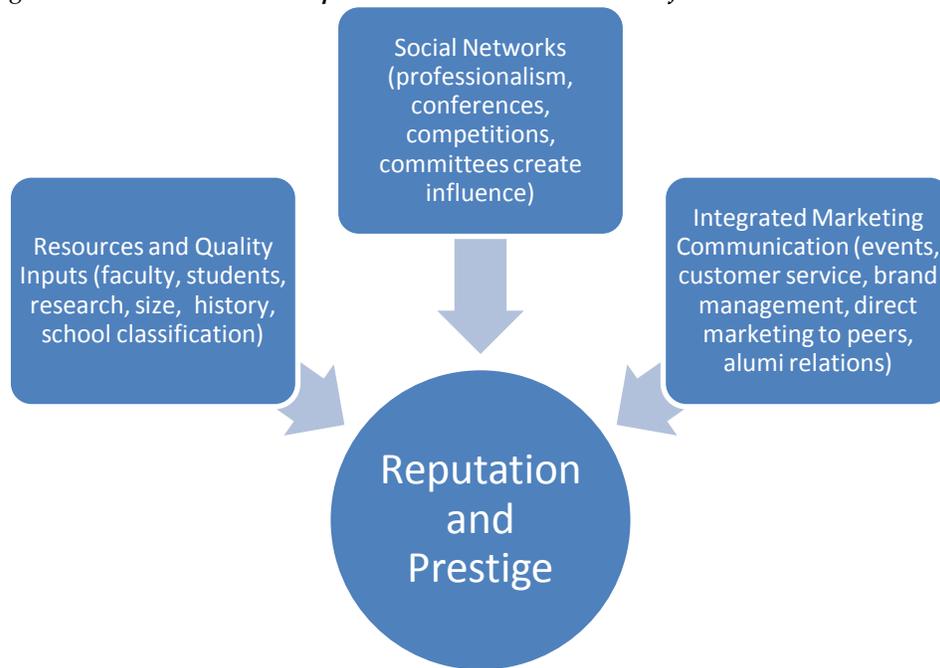
In contrast, this qualitative study of *USNWR* scorers for undergraduate business programs, participants shared stories and examples of what they think about when completing the peer ranking ballot. Many of the input variables

matched the Volkwein and Sweitzer (2006) model of prestige and reputation. However, to more accurately account for the human interactions that impact reputation I would include the influence of professional activities (AACSB, accreditation committees, use of AACSB data, etc.) and social networks (graduate school, employment, professional involvement, etc). My findings indicated that knowing people at other schools affects the opinions of administrators when completing the annual *USNWR* rankings. The quality of networks impacted perceptions that form reputations about schools. Integrated Marketing Communication also affects the perception of school. A quality program is moving away from a transactional model to a relationship model with stakeholders. Elements of IMC include event marketing, direct marketing, feature promotion, customer service and branding activities. Administrators did report interacting with best practices from other schools in the form of marketing, conferences, competitions, and benchmarking.

Consequently, the previous outcome oriented analysis of the *USNWR* university and program rankings seemed to miss important aspects of behavior when ranking other schools. I propose another model that explains the influences of perception of reputation through social networks (professionalism, AACSB, conferences, competitions, committee work, etc.) on the ranking of peer schools by deans and associate deans for undergraduate programs.

The input of three 'cells' comprise the external appearance or reputational DNA of a school. The first cell includes the basics that define quality, including the faculty, quality of research, quality of students, distinguished history, and overall reputation of the university the school is attached to. A school's effort to enhance their reputation through relationships, social networks, and leadership roles in national organizations becomes the second critical cell. Finally, deliberate strategies to define and position their brand through integrated marketing and all the tactics associated with developing strong customer relations and stakeholder support (academic advising, career services, leadership, student engagement, global initiatives, and continuous improvement) creates the third cell. The inputs from the three cells form the brand and reputation of the undergraduate program. Figure 4 illustrates this concept.

Figure 4: *Business School Reputation as the Intersection of Three Critical Areas*



Unintended Consequences of Rankings

I approached this research not as a study to determine if rankings were good or bad. Each administrator had something to say from both the positive and negative sides of this question. I approached this research from a frame that rankings from national magazines are a given in our profession. Consumers are eager for the information, magazines make money, and stakeholders respond to numerical scales. Despite the “winner take all” nature of this kind of reputation ranking scale and the numerous pleas in the literature for *USNWR* to take an alternative approach, I was simply trying to understand what is happening in the minds of peers as they evaluate other peers. I set out to do more consumer behavior research than critical theory. However, my research

did yield insight into the effects of rankings on undergraduate business education. As predicted by Astin (1999) and many others including the presidents that are members of the Education Conservancy (2007) that issued a scathing letter protesting national rankings, my findings supported that rankings are eliciting some unintended consequences to business schools. As predicted in previous research, administrators do think about faculty prestige when considering the brand of a peer. This causes business schools to overemphasize the reputation of top faculty members and underemphasize the development of current faculty and new talent. The same heavy hitters seem to circulate around business schools earning higher and higher salaries to get the attention of peers that know them. In addition, institutional missions, despite the kinds of students that diverse schools draw, are growing more and more similar as evidenced in the similar answers relative to the importance that student and faculty talent have on their perception of quality of a peer school. The rankings assume institutions are comparable and the ranking themselves are beginning to force the schools to look more and more alike if schools want to compete in the rankings game.

A number of highly ranked undergraduate programs are housed in state universities. When the undergraduate programs compete for national merit scholars and other top students from around the country are they providing a service to meet the needs of the citizens of their states? In many cases very highly ranked schools attract a significant portion of their student talent from out of state and yield high tuition revenue. Yet these same students move out of the state and seek employment elsewhere. The businesses and stakeholders of the state are the ones that loose out. If rankings were

not as important and reputation and prestige were limited to sports, an undergraduate business program would accept more diverse students from their own state and region. This is particularly important as the demand for business education has outpaced the supply of seats available for students in many highly regarded programs. Some form of advanced standing or professional admissions program is common in most highly ranked undergraduate programs. What was not measured or considered in any of the ranking rubrics is the value of the undergraduate business program to the state itself. The state's interest is often a silent stakeholder.

Learning continues to be an unknown in undergraduate business programs, despite AACSB and other accrediting agency's efforts to track assurance of learning and student outcomes. Learning outcomes are not measured by *USNWR* or *Business Week* and it is not clear they are valued by students when selecting a college to attend. Peers are currently using faculty talent and employer feedback to make inferences about what is going on in the classroom. Recruiter comments and who's getting job offers when schools compete is as of now the best evidence for measuring student learning outcomes. While recruiter's are a part of developing reputation of a school, overall this input plays a minor role in peer assessments.

Most of my subjects related stories of marketing approaches by peers. Most agreed that the numerous magazines, widgets, and at times inappropriate requests were wasteful uses of academic resources. However, many of these same respondents shared that they did read some of the materials and did find knowledge of best practices from

peers helpful. I am not as negative about peer to peer marketing as it does seem to arm others with ways to solve problems in our profession, in spite of the associated expense of this kind of communication.

Overall, the most significant negatives of ranking methodologies include creating an elite faculty at the expense of mentoring and growing others. And, because the rankings lump all institutions into one category for competition, many despite diversity in mission, try to compete within one consistent framework. The outcome is that schools are looking more and more alike.

Implications for Policy

USNWR, Best Business Program Rankings Encourage Good Behaviors Overall

The findings lead me to the conclusion that the USNWR, perception based rankings have a number of very positive outcomes that can favorably affect the nature of undergraduate programs. Recall that I guided my findings through a beauty pageant analogy. Consider the Miss America pageant because of an uncanny similarity to the USNWR top 50, as if the rankings were modeled after this competition. In the beginning, both the USNWR rankings and the Miss America Beauty Pageant were developed to sell magazines and attract customers, respectively. Both the Pageant and the magazine provide significant exposure and PR for the contestants in the top 50. In Miss America there are 50 states and some territories, in the USNWR ranking only the top 50 get free

publicity and top billing. Because the USNWR rankings have “tossed out” relatively few from the top 50 and the schools in the elite 10 bracket seem only to switch positions every now and then the competition is exciting, yet low stakes. Most commonly viewed as lacking scientific grounding and simply a popularity contest, the USNWR perception based ranking receives negative press and its editors are blogging and defending its validity. Even the participants in this study made disparaging comments and gave me long lists of negatives. I surprise even myself as I conclude that this kind of ranking, given the stability of America’s Best 50, has a positive effect on business education.

Despite the inherent elitism or “winner take all” in this reputation game created by the *USNWR* rankings good old fashioned competition is healthy in a market driven service industry, specifically business education in which we teach competition. The following is a list of considerations that were most often mentioned by the subjects in this study as having influence in their peer assessment decisions. Because brand value rarely emerges without strategic market positioning (Moore, 2004) I wanted to share all the possible influences that lead to brand knowledge and brand recognition. Here are explanations of how peer based rankings can have a positive effect on business education and some suggestions for overcoming some of the common negatives associated with the methodology.

1. Because over the last twenty years the *USNWR* undergraduate business program rankings have changed very little the stable membership in the top 50 norms the competition and provides an “annual pageant” with little negative fall-out as ranking outcomes are small and movement is insignificant. In other words, the stakes are low as most of the players tend to be stable in the *USNWR* undergraduate program rankings. However, *USNWR* would be well served to broaden its ranking methodology to include specific categories of schools, rather than lumping them all together as one. This little tweaking of the ranking rubric would minimize the institutional isomorphism effect and help schools stick to unique educational missions that might include open access and academic preparation specific to their target markets.
2. Contrary to popular belief, the mysterious, “black-box” sentiment of this perception based scoring provides little significant reason to “game” the ballot. Other than the mysterious qualities of the inputs that impact reputation, the negatives of this approach are rather minor, as compared to Business Week and other MBA rankings that include specific input and output measurements that can be micromanaged. Many administrators report blatant cheating and dishonesty in reporting data for these more quantitative rankings. The most disappointing effect of Business Week

and other rankings include schools' efforts to change their fundamental practices, negatively affecting students, illustrated by decreasing program size, admitting only highly competitive students, limiting international student enrollment, etc. In addition, the Business Week rankings receive much criticism for the dramatic flip-flops of the schools that somehow fall from grace in any given year. According to my subjects, the *USNWR* peer based ranking systems do not yield the gaming behavior that other kinds of ranking rubrics encourage.

3. Top positioned schools seem to be on their best "big brother and sister behaviors" when interacting with second tier schools, given that thousands of school administrators can vote. This was illustrated by schools reaching out in regional conferences, actively participating as professional peers in AACSB and sharing best practices through publications. In some cases the quest for excellence allows the top schools to learn from second tier schools with outstanding practices. The fact that all AACSB deans can vote helps encourage the large elite schools to get out and network. Without this ranking, these highly ranked schools might fall into the pattern of creating their own affinity groups and becoming very exclusive in their interactions.

4. Because most are uncertain about how to influence reputation, schools employ direct marketing and communication strategies. While some report annoyance by over the top cross marketing, others are grateful for the exposure to best practices. Often the best marketing materials communicate innovative solutions to common education challenges. Rather than sitting back and living on history and tradition there is a subliminal race for good ideas in order to get attention from others. Dean's cautioned the poor use of the word "unique", but they did acknowledge creativity and first movers as credible in earning distinction. Consequently, the cross marketing and race for attention encourages market-like behaviors that yield innovative ideas.
5. Given the appeal of rankings to stakeholders, especially students, the competition for top marks has created a market driven model of consumer service. More than traditional classes, today's schools customize to meet the demands of students and provide relationship- based services similar to for- profit industries. Students gain as they enjoy creative approaches to learning, academic advising, career services and other methods of engagement. In many cases, student input is used to continuously improve the school. However, an important caution to students is the halo effect of MBA program reputation in the rankings. Many top schools

have large highly ranked MBA and undergraduate programs. However, few schools can impress in both the MBA and undergraduate program because they compete for resources.

6. This ranking is good for creating prestige for business schools in large science universities where traditional science research and large grant contracts garner most attention in budget and resource decisions. The annual ranking announcements get business schools regular features in local and state press, resulting in stakeholder attention. Positive results are broadcasted widely and often appear in the University's branding documents, websites and in university foundation literature. There is a strong belief that people invest in winners. These media rankings give the sometimes marginalized business school at big science universities a leg to stand on in the battle for resources. As business schools tend to attract fewer national grants relative to big science in research intensive schools, the applied nature of the business school is often misunderstood by other university faculty members. A drop in the rankings can give a school leverage for additional resources to 'win back' their ranking positions. While it is initially negative to drop in the rankings, this can be leveraged by clever deans for additional support from stakeholders.

7. The *USNWR* ranking is extremely clever to enlist the judging efforts of both the strategic big picture deans that are well connected to faculty and the dedicated operational associate deans that are more dedicated to their schools through students, recent alumni, and other relationships. The two judges per school come at the ranking with different lenses that serve to compliment the process. In the study most schools reported a coordinated effort to ensure the ballots were completed, while maintaining independence in ranking the forms.
8. Faculty can be the big winners in this ranking game. Because the administrators' defined academic quality primarily linked to faculty quality and excellent research, PR materials often feature faculty. As a result well known faculty become brands themselves and often attract other star faculty while brightening the reputation of a given school. Administrators report that faculty like being featured in the media, in brochures and even on "baseball cards".

In spite of the for-profit motives, mysterious ranking rubric, a little investment in direct marketing, and the acceptance of a stable elite 50, evidence demonstrates that the *USNWR* ranking can have positive effects on business education. The beauty of the annual pageant (ranking exercise) is in the simplicity as little time and effort is spent on filling in

the ballot or gaming the ranking system. In order to improve the rankings, if the editors were so inclined, they might consider asking the judges to rank schools based on size or stratification in the market (perhaps using Carnegie classifications) and produce 'top 50' by unique institutional categories, allowing more schools to show off their quality. However, after over a decade of peer based rankings, there seems no indication that *USNWR* is interested in change.

What Was Missing

Even though my interviews covered much more than the direct questions, certain topics that I expected to surface did not. Part of the effectiveness of open-ended questions and general stream of consciousness interviews allows the interviewer to catch the "treasures" of the research when conversations take an unexpected turn and something really unique or provocative comes through. In general there was a lack of reference to diversity and multicultural initiatives. I also felt emphasis on teaching quality and the process of transforming "average" individuals into superstars is a quality that gets little attention from elite schools or those that are evaluating them. Unfortunately, the sentiment that quality of the input is quality of the output remains a belief of many administrators. As a profession we need to find a way to better communicate and quantify this "transformation process" that many of us see in our state schools with open

enrollment, inclusive admissions standards. One dean, who grew up in a foreign land, mentioned the importance of diversity within business school programs and expressed his interest in ensuring diversity within his school, but otherwise it went unmentioned along with the process of transformation.

Implications for Practice

The 20 administrators in this study provided ideas for effectively managing reputation for a business school brand. Information from this research could be helpful in providing new deans with insight into the management of peer based perceptions of quality.

The discussion on defining quality yielded interesting implications for practice. A composite of the findings illustrates the steps a dean might take to develop and maintain a highly regarded school and program:

1. Hire only the finest research professors and teachers and make sure they are well known with excellent social networks.
2. Have rigorous and relevant academic courses that will ensure graduates are well prepared students and alums will talk about the rigor in a positive way.
3. Prepare students with experiential learning so they can hit the ground running in the industry of their choice. The relationships with firms

providing experiential opportunities helps to develop a national reputation.

4. Make sure students are landing top placements and getting promoted because they've been prepared for leadership roles.
5. Attract and retain very high quality students so that they challenge the faculty. It is believed that faculty members improve when students are well prepared and interested in their studies. Unfortunately, transforming average students into superstars just doesn't have the cache as we haven't figured out how to measure this.
6. Select, develop, and highlight a distinction of your school. Work at this over time and be consistent. Get out there early as the business copy cats will soon catch-up. Early adopters in 'hot' areas win distinction points. Don't compromise on broad strengths of your school or limit your school's options. Use the distinction to enhance, not create your school's reputation.
7. Send your students out to competitions, the quality of the company your students keep matters. Make sure your student organizations are competing nationally in their student professional organizations at the national level.

8. Find donors to help you design and build “community friendly” new buildings, as buildings are important to organizational culture and a good way to gain national public relations and become viewed as innovative.
9. Support leadership programs and engage the students in the brand experience.

Influence better than direct marketing

The findings regarding how people receive information and create perceptions about brands can help inform financial decisions about cross marketing. This section provides clues to developing influence without spending a lot on direct marketing:

1. Retain top faculty as losing stars is costly financially and may harm your brand. Your peers notice the loss.
2. Make sure your newly minted PhD students are proud of their experience and speak fondly of your institution. During their interviews and when actively creating their research networks they’ll forever reflect your brand.
3. Hire a few “sticky” and very talented faculty that will attract others like them.

4. People listen when another faculty references a school or program, make sure your faculty and alums do this and you are actually carrying your brand story into national meetings and affinity groups.
5. Everything you do matters. If the children of faculty members have enrolled at your school, especially faculty from another University, treat these students well. These students and their faculty parents can become proud “bill boards” for your school if they have a good experience. You can bet the faculty parents will be talking about your school at their faculty meetings.
6. Take your employers to lunch, treat them well, make sure top employers attract and hire your top students. You want these recruiters to sing your praise when networking with other schools.
7. Because some people actually read alumni magazines, brochures, letters and e-news issues, send them. Make sure they are well done and truthful and most importantly filled with ideas and solutions that others can use. Don't send over the top “brag rags” .
8. Try to land stories in *Time*, *News Week* or *Biz Ed*, all were referenced as influential.
9. Concentrate marketing on “your peers”. It may not serve a school well to try to get the attention of an administrator at a school “above your

station.” Remember all AACSB deans and associate deans vote – you don’t have to influence everyone.

10. Go visit other schools. Get your people out “winning friends and influencing people” while learning from others and benchmarking.
11. Business Week rankings do matter because administrators pore over the data to figure out how the lucky few are earning their slots. If you’re a state school stuck in the bottom-be friendly, active and cutting edge and peers will feel sorry for you and reinforce common disdain for the poorly designed Business Week rankings.
12. Get to know EBI data. Someone is using your school as an aspirational peer. How do you compare with others?
13. Be a great place to work with honor and integrity. Where someone worked before, seemed often to only have negative connotations.
14. Play well with others, join regional groups, interact with all level of schools, they all vote and comprise a healthy social network.
15. Remember that where you went to school always forms your basis for judgment. However, times have changed since your undergraduate experience.

16. Recognize that the MBA and undergraduate programs have a love hate relationship, but the halo effect is a common belief as MBA rankings effectively bleed over to undergraduate program perceptions.
17. A significant windfall or donation if handled properly is the most cited way to move up in the rankings. Something in addition to a new name and building like luring top faculty and paying PhD students more than anyone will instantly get the attention of elite schools.
18. Try to keep your dean job at the same school longer than the average of six years. Who's in leadership and the stability of the person is important in brand strength.
19. The most elite schools have small undergraduate programs.
20. Become a magnet school- in which a particular group of students seek out your school so you can admit only the top percentage of these faithful followers. Religious schools and value priced, highly ranked schools fall into this category.
21. Carefully watch trends in your aspirational peer set.
22. Put resources into ensuring your students are engaged and have a student centered experience.
23. Maintain a consistent student conference and grow it year after year. Schools plan in their budgets to send students and your brand is

constantly referenced by the participants upon their return. Give awards and use this as a networking opportunity with the proud deans that the students represent.

24. Win student competitions, peers are watching and talking about the outcomes.
25. Encourage and support activities that help build student to student networks with other schools. Some of the best new ideas come from students.
26. Be active in AACSB as a national leader, member of accreditation visits and join boards that support business education including honorary and business fraternity boards. This is the most effective method of developing an international network.
27. Take advantage of AACSB affinity group and use the insider information to your advantage. Make it a point to attend affinity group meetings. They notice if you're not a leader in the elite club. Say good things about your school even when you are under stress.
28. Social networks, remember you are always a brand manager:
 - Attend conferences/discipline meetings
 - Be friendly and respected. Be honest yet very positive about your brand.

- Stay in your position as long as you can to develop alumni networks that are armed and ready to be your army, this is how truly great things happen...new buildings, naming opportunities, etc.
- Hope your University's sports teams have a good national reputation
- Capitalize on a long and proud history of your university or school, people like traditions
- Listen carefully to business executives and build strategic partnerships. They'll be your biggest advocates if you follow through.
- Develop your network with other deans when you are new. Everyone is willing to help the new guy/girl.
- Keep in touch with former PhD students
- Have larger and stronger advisory boards. Utilize their practical strengths and functional expertise to build your brand. Make them feel a part of the team.
- Make sure your most high-flying, successful grads stay in touch and reference their great experiences, people are listening as your alums are influencing others

Suggestions for Future Research

A number of interesting issues remained unaddressed from my research. I have a list of elements that my subjects outlined when they think of reputation. I do not have a way to quantify which are the most important. In addition, only 20 administrators from very similar schools participated in the interviews. A quantitative survey could be developed using the data categories relative to consumer behavior that resulted from this study so that a broader range of business school administrators could share their experiences with peer assessments. This follow-up study could provide more specific details by specific regions, size of schools, category of schools etc. Because this study only garnered the opinions of the administrators in a few highly ranked schools it would be equally important to understand quality, perception of quality, branding and ranking from other more diverse school administrators' perspectives. In higher education we must continue to understand institutional isomorphism and how rankings effect the diversity of school mission and outcomes for individual students.

Other topics that came up during the interviews included the varied roles of administrators. Because so much emphasis is placed on developing social networks and relationships with alumni and others within the profession I would like to know how administrators manage their time externally while

negotiating internal commitments. With a growing number of vacancies in business school dean positions, many believe a dean's job is undesirable and a no-win proposition. How can the executive suite of the business school be restructured so that deans have longer tenure and can accomplish the task of building brand equity in their school? Clearly, the deans can't do all of this alone. I would like to explore the organization of people in business schools and how relationships with internal and external stakeholders are divided and managed in order to avoid the "founder's syndrome" or the dean as the ever fleeting relationship manager and strategist. Since deans can become the brand of their schools in the eyes of donors and other administrators learning more about leadership and management in this executive position to yield longer tenure is of interest.

Another interesting issue could include, "boss fatigue", defined as the yo-yo effect of a high number of administrative leaders cycling through the dean's office. The deans average 4-5 years in their positions and the associate deans have much longer tenure. Better understanding the effect that itinerate deans have on program leaders is of interest when trying to build brand equity. Leadership, strategy, and management clearly make an impact on brand equity in the eyes of peers and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to learn about what influences deans and undergraduate deans when they fill out the *USNWR* ballot for the undergraduate business school rankings. Interviews with 10 deans and associate deans illustrated the stories behind the *USNWR* “black box” related to the perception of quality and how peers obtain information about other schools. The study yielded very helpful and practical roadmaps for successful peer networking and the building of reputation and prestige. The results also reinforced the effects of resource dependency, academic capitalism, professionalism and institutional theory, social networks, unique cultures in schools and how integrated marketing communication translates into brand development and management.

Because this unique, perception based ranking system used by *USNWR* for developing their list of “best undergraduate business programs”, is often discounted as a “beauty contest” little research has focused on the behavioral aspect of the ranking. This study contributes to the literature on rankings from the perspective of the judges. Integrated Marketing Communication is another area in which this study can contribute to the literature as a business school provides an excellent illustration for the concepts within a service industry as

administrators move from transactional to relationship models for their students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders of the program.

I hope this study will help inform colleagues about the importance of image, marketing and service, when trying to make decisions about resources in top business schools. Today's business schools have changed and in order to stay competitive services that emphasize relationships and customer service are required to meet the demands of the students and the market place.

APPENDIX A: USNWR RANKING BALLOT



Job No. 24D4
Version No. 11(1-2)
Sample ID (3-9)
SID id (10-13)

0 0010831 24D4 5004 011

2010 PEER ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES Undergraduate Business Programs

This year, *U.S. News & World Report* is conducting a survey of AACSB accredited undergraduate programs in business. They are listed below by state. This survey is being sent to the business school dean and a faculty member at each of these business schools. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

Directions for Overall Ratings:

1. Please rate the academic quality of undergraduate business programs at the following schools. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business has accredited all of these programs.
2. Please review the entire list first, considering each program's scholarship record, curriculum, and quality of faculty and graduates. Using a black pen, rate each school with which you are familiar on a scale from marginal (1) to distinguished (5) by marking an "X" in the corresponding box.
3. If you are not familiar with a school's faculty, programs, and graduates, please mark "don't know."
4. Separate instructions for submitting nominations of programs that excel in particular areas are found on page 16.
5. Return the completed survey in the postage-paid return envelope to Synovate, Inc. (If you have misplaced the envelope, you may return the survey to Angela Foster-Woods, Synovate, Inc. 222 South Riverside Plaza, Suite 350, Chicago, IL 60606-5809.)

Any questions? Contact the *America's Best Colleges*, help desk at (800) 408-5365 or usnews@synovate.net. Thank you!

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
ALABAMA							
Auburn University	001009	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Auburn University – Montgomery	006310	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Birmingham – Southern College	001012	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Jacksonville State University	001020	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Samford University	001036	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tuskegee University	001050	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Alabama (Cauverhouse)	001051	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Alabama – Birmingham	001052	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Alabama – Huntsville	001055	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Montevallo	001004	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of South Alabama	001057	<input type="checkbox"/>					
ALASKA							
University of Alaska – Anchorage	011462	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Alaska – Fairbanks	001063	<input type="checkbox"/>					

V11-1

RATINGS							
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
ARIZONA							
Arizona State University (Carey)	001081	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northern Arizona University	001082	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Arizona (Eller)	001083	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Arizona State University – West	666935	<input type="checkbox"/>					
ARKANSAS							
Arkansas State University	001090	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Arkansas Tech University	001089	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Henderson State University	001098	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ouachita Baptist University	001102	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southern Arkansas University	001107	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Arkansas (Walton)	001108	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Arkansas – Little Rock	001101	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Central Arkansas	001092	<input type="checkbox"/>					
CALIFORNIA							
California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo	001143	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State Polytechnic University – Pomona	001144	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Bakersfield	007993	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Chico	001148	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – East Bay	001138	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Fresno (Craig)	001147	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Fullerton	001137	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Northridge	001153	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Long Beach	001139	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Los Angeles	001140	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Sacramento	001150	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – San Bernardino	001142	<input type="checkbox"/>					
California State University – Stanislaus	001157	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Chapman University (Argyros)	001184	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Loyola Marymount University	011649	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Pepperdine University (Graziadio)	001264	<input type="checkbox"/>					
San Diego State University	001151	<input type="checkbox"/>					
San Francisco State University	001154	<input type="checkbox"/>					
San Jose State University	001155	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Santa Clara University (Leavey)	001328	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sonoma State University	001156	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of California – Berkeley (Haas)	001312	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of California – Riverside (Anderson)	001316	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of San Diego	010395	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of San Francisco (McLaren)	001325	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Southern California (Marshall)	001328	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of the Pacific	001329	<input type="checkbox"/>					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
COLORADO							
Colorado State University	001350	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Colorado State University – Pueblo (Hasan)	001365	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Fort Lewis College	001353	<input type="checkbox"/>					
United States Air Force Academy	001369	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Colorado – Boulder (Leeds)	001370	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Colorado – Colorado Springs	004509	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Colorado – Denver	006740	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Denver (Daniels)	001371	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Northern Colorado (Monfort)	001349	<input type="checkbox"/>					
CONNECTICUT							
Fairfield University	001385	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Quinnipiac University	001402	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sacred Heart University	001403	<input type="checkbox"/>					
United States Coast Guard Academy	001415	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Connecticut	029013	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Hartford (Barney)	001422	<input type="checkbox"/>					
DELAWARE							
Delaware State University	001428	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Delaware	001431	<input type="checkbox"/>					
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA							
American University (Kogod)	001434	<input type="checkbox"/>					
George Washington University	001444	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgetown University (McDonough)	001445	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Howard University	001448	<input type="checkbox"/>					
FLORIDA							
Barny University	001486	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Florida Atlantic University	001481	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Florida Gulf Coast University	032553	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Florida International University	009636	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Florida State University	001489	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Jacksonville University	001495	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rollins College	001515	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Stetson University	001531	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Central Florida	009954	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Florida (Warrington)	001535	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Miami	001536	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of North Florida	009841	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of South Florida	001537	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Tampa	001538	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of West Florida	003955	<input type="checkbox"/>					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
GEORGIA							
Augusta State University	001552	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Berry College	001554	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Clark Atlanta University	001551	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Clayton State University	008976	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Columbus State University (Turner)	001561	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Dalton State College	003956	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Emory University (Goizueta)	001564	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgia College and State University (Bunting)	001802	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgia Institute of Technology	001569	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgia Southern University	001572	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgia Southwestern State University	001573	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Georgia State University (Robinson)	001574	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Kennesaw State University (Coles)	001577	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Mercer University - Macon (Stetson)	001580	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Morehouse College	001582	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Savannah State University	001590	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Georgia (Terry)	001598	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of West Georgia (Richards)	001601	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Valdosta State University	001599	<input type="checkbox"/>					
HAWAII							
University of Hawaii - Hilo	029020	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Hawaii - Manoa	001610	<input type="checkbox"/>					
IDAHO							
Boise State University	001616	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Idaho State University	001620	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Idaho	001626	<input type="checkbox"/>					
ILLINOIS							
Bradley University (Foster)	001541	<input type="checkbox"/>					
DePaul University	001671	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Eastern Illinois University (Lumpkin)	001674	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Illinois State University	001692	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Loyola University Chicago	001710	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northern Illinois University	001737	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale	001758	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville	001759	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Illinois - Chicago	001776	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Illinois - Springfield	009333	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	001775	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Western Illinois University	001780	<input type="checkbox"/>					

		RATINGS					
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
INDIANA							
Ball State University	001786	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Butler University	001788	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana State University	006563	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University – Bloomington (Kelley)	001809	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University – Kokomo	001814	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University Northwest	001815	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University-Purdue University – Fort Wayne	001812	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University – South Bend	001816	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University Southeast	001817	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Purdue University – West Lafayette (Krannert)	001825	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Evansville	001795	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Notre Dame	001840	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Southern Indiana	001808	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Valparaiso University	001842	<input type="checkbox"/>					
IOWA							
Drake University	001860	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Iowa State University	001869	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Iowa (Tippie)	001892	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Northern Iowa	001890	<input type="checkbox"/>					
KANSAS							
Emporia State University	001927	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Kansas State University	001928	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Pittsburg State University (Kelce)	001926	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Kansas	001948	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Washburn University	001949	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Wichita State University (Barton)	001950	<input type="checkbox"/>					
KENTUCKY							
Bellarmine University (Rube)	001954	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Eastern Kentucky University	001963	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Morehead State University	001976	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Murray State University	001977	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northern Kentucky University	009275	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Kentucky (Gatton)	001989	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Louisville	001999	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Western Kentucky University	002002	<input type="checkbox"/>					
LOUISIANA							
Grambling State University	002006	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Louisiana State University – Baton Rouge (Ourso)	002010	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Louisiana State University – Shreveport	002013	<input type="checkbox"/>					

		RATINGS					
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
<i>Louisiana, continued</i>							
Louisiana Tech University	002008	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Loyola University New Orleans (Butt)	002016	<input type="checkbox"/>	(79)				
McNeese State University (Burton)	002017	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Nicholls State University	002005	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northwestern State University of Louisiana	002021	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southeastern Louisiana University	002024	<input type="checkbox"/>	(75)(75.4)				
Southern University and A&M College	009636	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tulane University (Freeman)	002029	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of New Orleans	002015	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Louisiana – Lafayette	002031	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Louisiana – Monroe	002020	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MAINE							
University of Maine	002053	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Southern Maine	009762	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MARYLAND							
Frostburg State University	002072	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Loyola College Maryland (Sellinger)	002078	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Morgan State University (Graves)	002083	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Salisbury University (Perdue)	002091	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Towson University	002099	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Baltimore (Merrick)	002102	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Maryland – College Park (Smith)	002103	<input type="checkbox"/>	(84)				
MASSACHUSETTS							
Babson College	002121	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Bentley University	002124	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Boston College (Carroll)	002128	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Boston University	002130	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Brandeis University	002133	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Clark University	002139	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Stean)	002178	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northeastern University	002199	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Simmons College	002208	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Suffolk University (Sawyer)	002218	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Massachusetts – Amherst (Isenberg)	002221	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Massachusetts – Boston	002222	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth (Charlton)	002210	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Massachusetts – Lowell	002161	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	002233	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Western New England College	002226	<input type="checkbox"/>	(50)				

		RATINGS					
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
MICHIGAN							
Central Michigan University	002243	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Eastern Michigan University	002259	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Grand Valley State University (Seidman)	002268	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Michigan State University (Broad)	002290	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Michigan Technological University	002292	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Northern Michigan University (Cisler)	002301	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Oakland University	002307	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Saginaw Valley State University	002314	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Detroit Mercy	002323	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor	009092	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Michigan – Dearborn	002326	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Michigan – Flint	002327	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Wayne State University	002329	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Western Michigan University (Haworth)	002330	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MINNESOTA							
Minnesota State University – Mankato	002360	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Minnesota State University – Moorhead	002367	<input type="checkbox"/>					
St. Cloud State University (Herberger)	002377	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Minnesota – Duluth	002388	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities (Carlson)	003969	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MISSISSIPPI							
Jackson State University (Moore)	002410	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Millsaps College (Eise)	002414	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Mississippi State University	002423	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Mississippi	002440	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Southern Mississippi	002441	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MISSOURI							
Central Missouri State University (Harmon)	002454	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Missouri State University	002503	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rockhurst University	002499	<input type="checkbox"/>					
St. Louis University	002508	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southeast Missouri State University (Harrison)	002501	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Truman State University	002495	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Missouri – Columbia	002516	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Missouri – Kansas City (Bloch)	002518	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Missouri – St. Louis	002519	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Washington University in St. Louis (Olin)	002520	<input type="checkbox"/>					

RATINGS							
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
MONTANA							
Montana State University	002532	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Montana	002536	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEBRASKA							
Creighton University	002542	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Nebraska – Kearney	002551	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Nebraska – Lincoln	002555	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Nebraska – Omaha	002554	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEVADA							
University of Nevada – Las Vegas	002569	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Nevada – Reno	002568	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEW HAMPSHIRE							
University of New Hampshire (Whittemore)	002589	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEW JERSEY							
College of New Jersey	002642	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Fairleigh Dickinson University (Silberman)	008770	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Monmouth University	002616	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Montclair State University	002617	<input type="checkbox"/>					
New Jersey Institute of Technology	002621	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rider University	002628	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rowan University	002609	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rutgers – Camden	004741	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rutgers – Newark	002631	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Rutgers – New Brunswick	006964	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Seton Hall University (Stillman)	002632	<input type="checkbox"/>					
William Paterson University (Cotsakos)	002625	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEW MEXICO							
New Mexico State University	002657	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of New Mexico (Anderson)	010313	<input type="checkbox"/>					
NEW YORK							
Adelphi University	002886	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Alfred University	002668	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Canisius College (Wehle)	002881	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Clarkson University	002699	<input type="checkbox"/>					
College at Brockport – SUNY	002841	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Cornell University	002711	<input type="checkbox"/>					
CUNY – Baruch College (Zicklin)	004766	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Fordham University	002722	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Hofstra University (Zarb)	002732	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Iona College (Hagan)	002737	<input type="checkbox"/>					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know	
<i>New York, continued</i>								
Ithaca College	002739	<input type="checkbox"/>	(63)					
Le Moyne College	002748	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Long Island University – C.W. Post Campus	002754	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Manhattan College	002758	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Marist College	002765	<input type="checkbox"/>						
New York University (Stern)	002785	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Niagara University	002788	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Pace University (Lubin)	002791	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Lally)	002803	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Rochester Institute of Technology	002806	<input type="checkbox"/>						
St. Bonaventure University	002817	<input type="checkbox"/>						
St. John Fisher College	002821	<input type="checkbox"/>						
St. John's University	002823	<input type="checkbox"/>	(75) 0079-80					
SUNY – Binghamton	002836	<input type="checkbox"/>						
SUNY – Geneseo	002845	<input type="checkbox"/>						
SUNY – Institute of Technology, NY	011678	<input type="checkbox"/>						
SUNY – Oswego	002848	<input type="checkbox"/>						
SUNY – Plattsburgh	002849	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Siena College	002818	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Syracuse University	002882	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University at Albany – SUNY	002835	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University at Buffalo – SUNY	009554	<input type="checkbox"/>						
NORTH CAROLINA								
Appalachian State University (Walker)	002906	<input type="checkbox"/>	(52)					
East Carolina University	002923	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Elon University (Love)	002927	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Fayetteville State University	002928	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Meredith College	002945	<input type="checkbox"/>						
North Carolina A&T State University	002905	<input type="checkbox"/>						
North Carolina Central University	002950	<input type="checkbox"/>						
North Carolina State University – Raleigh	002972	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Queens University of Charlotte	002957	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of North Carolina – Asheville	002907	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (Kenan-Flagler)	002974	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of North Carolina – Charlotte (Belk)	002975	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of North Carolina – Greensboro (Bryan)	002976	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of North Carolina – Wilmington (Cameron)	002984	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Wake Forest University (Calloway)	002978	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Western Carolina University	002881	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Winston-Salem State University	002886	<input type="checkbox"/>	(48)					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
NORTH DAKOTA							
North Dakota State University	009285	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of North Dakota	003005	<input type="checkbox"/>					
OHIO							
Bowling Green State University	003018	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Case Western Reserve University (Weatherhead)	003024	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Cleveland State University (Nance)	003032	<input type="checkbox"/>					
John Carroll University	003050	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Kent State University	003051	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Miami University – Oxford (Farmer)	007104	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ohio Northern University	003089	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ohio State University – Columbus (Fisher)	006883	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ohio University	003100	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Akron	003123	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Cincinnati	003125	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Dayton	003127	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Toledo	003131	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Wright State University	009188	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Xavier University (Williams)	003144	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Youngstown State University (Williamson)	003145	<input type="checkbox"/>					
OKLAHOMA							
Oklahoma State University	003170	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	003179	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Oklahoma (Price)	003184	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Tulsa	003185	<input type="checkbox"/>					
OREGON							
Oregon State University	003210	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Portland State University	003216	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Oregon (Lundquist)	003223	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Portland	003224	<input type="checkbox"/>					
PENNSYLVANIA							
Bloomsburg University	003315	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Carnegie Mellon University	003242	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Clarion University of Pennsylvania	009235	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Drexel University (LeBow)	003256	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Duquesne University (Palumbo)	003258	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Eberly)	003277	<input type="checkbox"/>					
King's College	003282	<input type="checkbox"/>					
La Salle University	003287	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lehigh University	003289	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Penn State – Erie, The Behrend College	003333	<input type="checkbox"/>					

		RATINGS					
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
<i>Pennsylvania, continued</i>							
Pennsylvania State University – University Park (Smeal)	006965	<input type="checkbox"/> (28)					
Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg	006814	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Robert Morris University	003359	<input type="checkbox"/>					
St. Joseph's University (Haub)	003367	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania	003326	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Susquehanna University	003359	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Temple University (Fox)	003371	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Pennsylvania (Wharton)	003378	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Pittsburgh	003379	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Scranton	003384	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Villanova University	003388	<input type="checkbox"/>					
West Chester University of Pennsylvania	003328	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Widener University	003313	<input type="checkbox"/>					
RHODE ISLAND							
Bryant University	003402	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Roger Williams University	004917	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Rhode Island	003414	<input type="checkbox"/> (45)					
SOUTH CAROLINA							
Clemson University	003425	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Coastal Carolina University	003451	<input type="checkbox"/>					
College of Charleston	003428	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Francis Marion University	009226	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lander University	003435	<input type="checkbox"/>					
South Carolina State University	003446	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The Citadel	003423	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of South Carolina – Aiken	003449	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of South Carolina – Columbia (Moore)	003448	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of South Carolina – Upstate	006951	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Winthrop University	003456	<input type="checkbox"/>					
SOUTH DAKOTA							
University of South Dakota	010300	<input type="checkbox"/>					
TENNESSEE							
Belmont University	003479	<input type="checkbox"/>					
East Tennessee State University	003487	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Middle Tennessee State University	003510	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tennessee State University	003522	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Tennessee Technological University	003523	<input type="checkbox"/> (69)					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
<i>Tennessee, continued</i>							
University of Memphis (Fogelman)	003509	<input type="checkbox"/> (61)					
University of Tennessee – Chattanooga	003529	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Tennessee – Knoxville	003530	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Tennessee – Martin	003531	<input type="checkbox"/>					
TEXAS							
Abilene Christian University	003537	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Baylor University (Hankamer)	006967	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Lamar University	003581	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Prairie View A&M University	003630	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Sam Houston State University	003606	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southern Methodist University (Cox)	003613	<input type="checkbox"/>					
St. Mary's University of San Antonio	003623	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Stephen F. Austin State University	003624	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas A&M International University	009651	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas A&M University – College Station (Mays)	010388	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas A&M University – Commerce	003665	<input type="checkbox"/> (75) (7/19-30)					
Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi	011161	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas Christian University (Neeley)	003636	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas Southern University (Jones)	003642	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas State University – San Marcos	003615	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Texas Tech University (Rawls)	003644	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Trinity University	003647	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Houston (Bauer)	003652	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Houston – Clear Lake	011711	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Houston – Downtown	012826	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Houston – Victoria	013231	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of North Texas	003594	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – Arlington	003656	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – Austin (McCombs)	003658	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – Dallas	009741	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – El Paso	003661	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas of the Permian Basin	009630	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – Pan American	003599	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – San Antonio	010115	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Texas – Tyler	011163	<input type="checkbox"/>					
UTAH							
Brigham Young University – Provo (Marriott)	003670	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Southern Utah University	003678	<input type="checkbox"/>					
University of Utah (Eccles)	003675	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Utah State University	003677	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Utah Valley University	004027	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Weber State University (Goddard)	003680	<input type="checkbox"/> (43)					

		RATINGS						
		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know	
VERMONT								
University of Vermont	003696	<input type="checkbox"/>	(48)					
VIRGINIA								
Christopher Newport University	003706	<input type="checkbox"/>						
College of William and Mary	003705	<input type="checkbox"/>						
George Mason University	003749	<input type="checkbox"/>						
James Madison University	003721	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Longwood University	003719	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Norfolk State University	003765	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Old Dominion University	003728	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Radford University	003732	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Shenandoah University	003737	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Richmond (Robins)	003744	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Virginia (McIntire)	006968	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Virginia Commonwealth University	003735	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Virginia Military Institute	003753	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Virginia State University	003764	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Virginia Tech (Pamplin)	003754	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Washington and Lee University	003768	<input type="checkbox"/>	(62)					
WASHINGTON								
Eastern Washington University	003775	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Gonzaga University	003778	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Pacific Lutheran University	003785	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Seattle Pacific University	003788	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Seattle University (Albers)	003790	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Washington	003798	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Washington State University	003800	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Western Washington University	003802	<input type="checkbox"/>						
WEST VIRGINIA								
Marshall University (Lewis)	003815	<input type="checkbox"/>						
West Virginia University	003827	<input type="checkbox"/>						
WISCONSIN								
Marquette University	003863	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire	003917	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse	003919	<input type="checkbox"/>	(75) 08/79-80					
University of Wisconsin – Madison	003895	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee	003896	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh	009630	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – Parkside	005015	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – River Falls	003923	<input type="checkbox"/>						
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater	003926	<input type="checkbox"/>	(28)					

RATINGS

		Distinguished 5	Strong 4	Good 3	Adequate 2	Marginal 1	Don't Know
WYOMING							
University of Wyoming	003932	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)					

28-30 open

II. Undergraduate Business Specialty Offerings

In this section, we ask that you identify the specialty courses or programs that you offer in your undergraduate business program. Please check each specialty area in which you offer courses or programs by marking an "X" in the corresponding box under Column A. Then identify the three specialty areas in your department with the highest undergraduate enrollment by marking an "X" in the corresponding box under Column B.

	<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>
Accounting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management Information Systems.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International Business.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entrepreneurship.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Real Estate.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Production/Operations Management.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supply Chain Management/Logistics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quantitative Analysis/Methods.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance/Risk Management.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<small>01-42</small>	<small>04-99</small>
	<small>03 open</small>	<small>06/76-60</small>

III. Best Undergraduate Business Programs by Specialty

In this section, we ask you to identify the schools with the best undergraduate programs in each specialty. Please identify up to 10 schools in each area by writing the identification codes for each school you select on the list below. (The identification code is found to the right of the school name on the previous pages.) You may list your selections in any order and may select fewer than ten.

<u>Accounting</u>	<u>Finance</u>	<u>Management Information Systems</u>	<u>International Business</u>	<u>Entrepreneurship</u>	<u>Management</u>
_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)
_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)
_____ (53-58)	_____ (59-64)	_____ (65-70)	_____ (65-70)	_____ (67-72)	_____ (63-68)
_____ (59-64)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (65-74) 15-80
_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 14-80	_____ (21-26)
_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 13-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)
_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 12-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)
_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 11-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (59-64)
_____ (69-74) 10-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)
_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)

<u>Real Estate</u>	<u>Marketing</u>	<u>Production/Operations Management</u>	<u>Supply Chain Management/Logistics</u>	<u>Quantitative Analysis/Methods</u>	<u>Insurance/Risk Management</u>
_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 18-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)
_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 17-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)
_____ (69-74) 16-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)
_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)
_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)
_____ (33-38)	_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)
_____ (39-44)	_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 22-80
_____ (45-50)	_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 21-80	_____ (21-26)
_____ (51-56)	_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 20-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)
_____ (57-62)	_____ (63-68)	_____ (69-74) 19-80	_____ (21-26)	_____ (27-32)	_____ (33-38) 23-80



APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Professionalism and Symbolic Interactionism	How are administrators influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools?
Integrated Marketing Communication; professionalism & Symbolic Interactionism	What methods are administrators utilizing to influence brand perception with their stakeholders and educational peers?
Resource Dependency & Academic Capitalism	Are competitors treated differently when evaluating academic reputation?

Associate Dean Interview Protocol (can be obtained from research ahead of time)

Name of Person:

Discipline:

School:

Schools where academic degrees were received:

Employment history (schools):

Brief description of duties:

Location of school:

Briefing:

Purpose: I am learning about deans' and associate deans' views of academic quality in undergraduate business programs.

Method: Semi structured interview, with the hope that we will engage in an open, descriptive dialog about your world, through your experiences.

How: Our conversation will be tape recorded and transcribed with the transcription sent back to you for final approval

Confidentiality: signed approval

Research Question: How are administrators influenced when evaluating the reputation of peer schools?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe your experiences with academic quality and how you recognize quality in your school's undergraduate program and in other schools' programs.

How do you obtain information about best practices for business schools?

Do you apply practices you've learned from other schools? Do you have examples?

Describe your completion of peer based evaluations (i.e. US News and World Report) for undergraduate programs.

What do you remember about schools you rank? What differentiates them?

In your school, who participates in completing the *US News* annual ranking of the undergraduate program? How does your school handle this process? Is it coordinated? Reviewed by someone on behalf of your college? Is it discussed?

Research Question: Are close business school competitors scored differently when evaluating academic reputation?

Interview Questions:

Describe or discuss how you think deans rank close competitors on the US News surveys?

Are you aware of your competitors when completing the survey?
Do you treat some schools differently than others?

Are you concerned that others might rank schools differently that are direct competitors?

What are the benefits and negatives associated with national magazine rankings?

—

Research Question: What methods are administrators utilizing to influence brand perception with their stakeholders and educational peers?

Interview Questions:

Describe the kind of PR and marketing activities your school engages in to promote the undergraduate program. Why do you do this?

Who does this and how?

Is there an active campaign to improve your school's rankings? If so, how is this being done?

(These are probes for integrated marketing communication)

Please comment on the kinds of functions the school sponsors.

How events are marketed, is direct marketing done?

Do you have strategies to impact customer service/student service?

Do you have specific brand messages?

How do you shape and influence community in your school?

Who crafts the brand messages and why? How do you measure success? Do you think significant resources are put into external marketing efforts, why?

Approximate budget allocation for PR efforts? Do you have trouble justifying the expense to your faculty and board?

Debriefing

“As you know, we started out today talking about academic quality and methods of promotion and communication. Is there a question area I should have asked that I might have missed? I have no further questions. Thank you again, I’ll send you a transcript of our conversation and a summary of the overall findings of the study.”

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