



SAN DIEGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

College of Business Administration

SDSU's College of Business Administration has a vision to become the leader in global entrepreneurship training. In the March 2006 edition of the CONNECT newsletter, Dean Gail Naughton was interviewed regarding her plans to transform the College of Business Administration.

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SDSU Business School Plotting Course for Global Success

BY ANDREA SIEDSMA

Just four years ago, San Diego State University's international business program didn't even have Top 10 status. Now, it is the largest undergraduate program of its kind in the country, and is ranked No. 9 nationally by *U.S. News and World Report*. Meanwhile, SDSU's College of Business Administration, ranked second among public undergraduate business programs in California, (according to *US News and World Report*) is also the highest ranked business college in San Diego and in the entire CSU system.



GAIL K. NAUGHTON

Gail Naughton, who left the life science industry to take the helm of SDSU's business school in 2002, has even bigger plans for the college. Naughton, co-founder and former vice chairman of San Diego-based Advanced Tissue Sciences, is the first female biotech entrepreneur to lead a major business program at a U.S. university. The former university professor and cell biologist's goal is to turn SDSU into the world's best business school for training global leaders.

In a recent interview with CONNECT, Naughton discussed the college's accomplishments, as well as its priorities over the next few years as it continues to equip future leaders with skill sets to run successful businesses without borders.

Q: What has been your strategy for enhancing the college's offerings and reputation?

A: We have done a two-year strategic plan for our graduate and undergraduate executive programs and have benchmarked ourselves against schools we aspire to be like. We have already had excellence, and we continue to grow our international business, entrepreneurship, and accounting/governance departments. Those are the areas we believe are critically essential to educate true global entrepreneurship. First of all, business is going global. Whether it's putting headquarters in other countries or selling over the Internet, it's a new way of thinking. We are moving in a tremendously rapidly changing business environment and people have to make quick decisions. If they don't make good decisions they will be left behind. Entrepreneurship no longer means small. It's the culture of your company and how quickly you can adapt to change and competition, and at the same time doing it on a global level.

Q: What is your goal in the next five years for the business school?

A: Our goal is to become the world's best business school at training global leaders. What I mean by global leaders is people who are able to make a decision for their company that will allow them to expand globally. Should I move into China or into the U.K.? You have to know the difference in the governance and accounting principles in those areas, the difference in the cultures, know all the importation issues, and how easy it is to hire people. You have to look at every aspect before you move into another country. But you should be able to move quickly because you understand the similarities and differences in doing business in those regions.

Q: What have you done to help accomplish this goal?

A: We have hired a lot of new faculty to help us fulfill this new mission. We're looking at hiring 14 new faculty members for this fall and 14 for the fall of 2007. We are able to bring in new talent while leveraging the tremendous talent and rankings the school already has. ...We're committed to doing whatever we can to train the business leaders who will continue to fuel the economy of San Diego.

Q: How are you training students to be global leaders?

A: We have designed some new curriculum so we will not be offering entrepreneurship just at the graduate level. We have designed a curriculum for undergraduates, who need to think creatively and learn how to make quick and smart decisions. San Diego is composed of a number of entrepreneurial companies. We don't have the big car manufacturers of the world. We are the leaders in biotech, telecom, software and we continue to be those leaders. Those are very rapidly growing entrepreneurial companies. If you look at

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China alone, the opportunities we have in terms of educational partnerships and business partnerships for our students are huge, and we are poised to take advantage of that. We have been offering a master's program in Taiwan for several years. We just started one in Singapore and are negotiating one in China. We are also negotiating with a university in Hong Kong to offer a joint program in international business. Hong Kong is a leader in finance and banking and we are leaders in entrepreneurship. With China growing so quickly, the country's leaders are going to have to concentrate on teaching people how to think like entrepreneurs. A partnership between the SDSU College of Business and the Chinese University of Hong Kong allows our faculty more research opportunities and it allows both sets of students to interact with two different economies.

Q: How has SDSU's College of Business Administration set itself apart from other business schools?

A: We want to be like the Wharton of the West Coast. It's difficult to find a business school that has focused on the areas I have spoken about. That makes us distinct. By taking advantage of our global position we will have some opportunities that will be amazing.

Last semester, we started a new MBA course for family owned businesses. The students are so excited about what they're learning that they bring their parents into the classroom. We have been approached by our potential partners in Hong Kong to offer our family business program there. We'll be able to globalize our family business program and help our faculty improve their research.

Q: What are the college's priorities over the next five years?

A: The priorities will include continuing to develop novel and distinctive curriculum and to solidify partnerships that will distinguish us. We will also continue to seek the funds we need to endow the programs so we can pay competitively and attract and retain top professors and students. It's far more economical for local companies to hire employees who are already in San Diego so they're looking more and more to us to train those people.

Q: What role does the Entrepreneurial Management Center play in the school's success?

A: The EMC continues to look at ways to focus on more high tech training. The center has been running a global business plan competition called Venture Challenge for several years. That program has been highly successful. Through the EMC, we have a track record of helping a number of companies get their products closer to market. In terms of globalization, the EMC has worked with the Beyster Institute's Middle East Entrepreneur Training program to teach business executives not only how to be entrepreneurs but also how they can globalize their companies. We're looking at doing more and more of those types of programs. The EMC is a great springboard for us to show our success rate and to help grow that success.

Q: What kind of new life science initiatives does the business school have?

A: We are looking at developing an MBA in life science. We would like to be able to leverage our location in San Diego as one of the top biotech clusters in the country and partner with a top 25 MBA school. We are also in our third year of a joint Ph.D./MBA program. Students earning their Ph.D. in cell and molecular biology at SDSU/UCSD can now earn an MBA concurrently. These students will be uniquely prepared for a variety of leadership positions in biotech/life science companies, such as business and corporate development and strategic planning.

Q: How have you used your experience in navigating the ups and downs of building a company to run SDSU's business school?

A: One week after I started came a huge budget cut for the state and it continued for the next 24 months. You learn how to hunker down and get the essentials done, and you can't concentrate on what's nice to have, but you have to maintain the critical mass and critical impetus to continue to make progress at some level. It was a great time for us

to step back and do a strategic plan and look at where we want to be in five to 10 years and analyze what's working. Strategic planning is a big part of business. If you don't have a strategic plan then you're not going to be around. I'm happy our state is finally getting a strategic plan. ... In business, in order to succeed you need thick skin, and it's not a bad thing to have as a dean either.

Q: How has SDSU's business school responded to industry's needs?

A: What we've been doing with our international business program is a good example. As companies have become more global, they've realized that it's not just about business, it's about learning the culture and negotiating in other countries. What distinguishes our international business program is we have a mandated focus on language and culture. Our business students have to become fluent in a foreign language, and many times have to take their business courses in a foreign language. We are the first school to have a dual or multiple degree program. A business student at SDSU will spend part of her training here and then, for example, in Mexico, and not only continue her language classes but also take her business courses in Spanish. We make sure our students not only understand the basics of business but the impact that culture, the church and government have on business in a particular country. We have a number of schools we partner with for dual degree programs. Exposure to international business is key. For our international students, we also mandate they study abroad for a semester. We have one of the few programs that mandate that. Another thing we've done is we understand that before you actually graduate, you need to be able to go and integrate all the basics you learned. Before you can get your MBA at SDSU, you have to do a business consulting project by taking on a real life project from a local company. General Atomics has done over 25 projects with us, and many of them have become successful business units for the company. This is not just theory; the students have to think and use their best decision making and market research skills. It's how to put best practices into place to help grow a company and make sure it's using the tools available to it, whether it's the Internet for advertising, or Quicken for accounting.

Q: What is the future role of SDSU's business school in helping fuel entrepreneurship in the San Diego Region?

A: We are on the trajectory to global business excellence. Through the various new hires and partnerships and by bringing in more executives and entrepreneurs in residence, we're going to be able to map that trajectory to success. We will continue to look at ways we can serve the business community. For example, we're looking at the need for real estate and the growth potential for the industry in Southern California; we're looking at potential partners in China who want to become leaders in bio devices and biotechnology but can't do it on their own. We want to partner with them, rather than compete with them.

Q: How will each of the region's business schools set themselves apart while remaining competitive?

A: In order to be successful we will each have to be distinct. The UCSD Rady School of Management focuses on technical innovators and teaching them how to be entrepreneurs. We don't focus as much on the scientists and technical experts. We're focused on students who want a strong general business background. We teach them how to be smart, global business thinkers. We really don't compete for students. In terms of where we do compete on a national level is to be able to distinguish ourselves in rankings. Rankings are what new professors and new students look at and what the donors look at as well.



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