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THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Wendy Klepetar, College of St Benedict, Department of Management
Barbara Edwards, St John's University, Department of Management
John Parley, College of St Benedict, Department of Management

ABSTRACT

The Organizational Leadership Program is a yearlong simulation including role playing, reading, and management curriculum for a select group of students. They are actively involved in the learning process, with emphasis placed on the dynamics of leadership. This paper highlights information about the program's development, goals, structure, and activities.

THE PROGRAM

The Organizational Leadership Program is a year-long, sixteen credit organizational simulation that serves as the management major for a group of sixty-four students annually. Experiential learning becomes the primary instructional method, not just for a course, but for the entire curriculum. Students build their own organizations within which they enact managerial roles.

Application to the Organizational Leadership Program is the first step in the simulation. Junior management majors are invited to attend informational meetings in the Spring Semester. Application procedures mirror the recruitment and selection procedures employed by firms seeking entry-level managerial personnel. A selection committee consisting of current faculty and students is formed. Applicants are individually interviewed by teams of three committee members, using a standardized interview format. The teams then meet as a committee of the whole to make selection decisions. The new recruits attend organizational functions in the spring as a form of orientation. They are assigned summer readings as preparation for the Fall.

All participants meet daily for two hours in September for a Seminar, "Developing Managerial Competence." Topics include organizational and managerial theory, review of the functions of typical business organizations, and orientation to The industry selected by the faculty and 'o the external environment. The seminar is designed to review, expand, and focus the material learned in the first three years of collegiate business education. Students are divided into their organizations by the third week of classes. Diversify in terms of functional interests and gender guide team formation. Each organization is headed by a CEO who is selected by the firm's Board of Directors. These Boards are composed of the faculty members who are teaching the Program. All Program participants are invited to nominate themselves for the CEO positions. They submit letters of application, resumes, and letters of recommendation. They are individually interviewed by the Board. A common set of interview questions is again used. The Board selects the best applicants, who then go through further selection procedures, which have varied from year to year. The Board then selects the CEOs and begins to give assignments to the companies. The last assignment in September is the preparation of an Industry Characteristics report.

The firms then begin operations. Each one is given an office, which is available to members of the firm throughout the day. We are in the manufacturing sector of the economy and this office represents corporate headquarters. Each firm also possesses a simulated factory and warehouse, with accompanying workers and salespeople. The students begin to compete weekly within a computer simulation, which requires them to make a full range of business decisions. A series of statements are generated to reflect their performance and their competitive position within the industry. We are involved in an on-going effort to improve this computer simulation in order to mirror the richness of the experience within the OLP. We are also developing a computerized database describing the employees who work outside of corporate headquarters. The simulation administration works closely with the students to incorporate their innovations within the simulation. By the end of October the companies must define their mission statement, describe their produc' line, and begin to envision factory layout, marketing plans, etc. As the year progresses operations are expanded. During the first week they are encouraged to begin the task of designing their organizations and their jobs. The bulk of the student's' work consists of the daily operation of their businesses. There are also assignments planned by the faculty. Each firm must negotiate a labor contract with faculty who enact the roles of labor leaders. Twice a year the companies present annual reports to the stockholders. At the end of the year, each firm devises a five-year strategic plan. Each student must attend four of the Management Development Seminars. The Program is also enriched by inviting in members of the academic and business communities to give workshops and presentations of interest to the students. They have introduced variations such as major reorganizations, including mergers and acquisitions and international expansions. There have been EEOC suits when firms have engaged in discriminatory personnel practices, and industrial sabotage.

Performance in the OLP is evaluated by peers and faculty. Students receive two grades each semester; one based on individual performance and one based on The performance of their company as a whole. The students also evaluate the Program and instructors. Faculty roles in the OLP include advisor, teacher, Board member, counselor, union negotiator, and program administrator. The Organizational Leadership Program has been very successful. The number of applicants to the OLP has increased from forty-two to ninety-four. Corporate recruiters have been enthusiastic about its graduates, and informal discussion with alumni indicates a high level of satisfaction.

REFERENCES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST