

# DOING DECA: ANATOMY OF AN EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAM INITIATIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*DECA is a national not-for-profit educational corporation that sponsors marketing competitions for students at the state or regional and international levels. The paper presents a case study of a highly successful program initiative aimed at achieving student success and institutional recognition through the DECA competitions. It describes the nature of the DECA competitions, the strategy employed to achieve student success, and the actual results of the program initiative. In the process, it analyzes the experience from the perspective of experiential learning theory, drawing generalized conclusions that might be applied by other institutions in DECA competitions, other extracurricular experiential programs, and experiential programs in general.*

## INTRODUCTION

DECA (originally, Distributive Education Clubs of America) was founded in 1946 as a broad-based organization for students interested in distributive (marketing) education. It has subsequently broadened its mission to include helping prepare students for careers in entrepreneurship, finance, hospitality, management, and marketing (see <http://www.deca.org/about/>). DECA provides programs that complement classroom education experientially by exposing students to professional best practices in their field, creating networking opportunities, and providing an opportunity to apply and test their skills in a competitive setting. Today, DECA boasts 215,000 members, 3,500 high school chap-

ters, 275 collegiate chapters (15,000 members), and 5,500 advisors.

DECA is only one of a large number of what Alfeld et al. (2007) characterized as *career and technical student organizations* (CTSOs), a subcategory of what Marsh (1992) referred to as *total extracurricular activity participation* (TEAP). These are organizations that work in conjunction with academic educational programs to provide students with experience applying what they have learned in an actual or simulated working environment, often sponsoring formal competitions in which the students may participate. Extracurricular competitive events have been an on-going subject for discussion in the ABSEL literature, including simulations (Biggs, Marks, Schafer, & Sharma, 1999; Burks, 1974; Fritzsche, Achtenhagen, Lightner, & Negri, 2001; Jensen, 1974; Parrish, 1975; Thavikulwat, 2001), case-study competitions (Reed, 1979; Stone & Urban, 1981), and competitions among actual student enterprises (Prasad, 2008).

In a study of five CTSOs (including DECA), Smith, Stewart, and Mihalevich (1984) interviewed both students and advisors, identifying seven common clusters of goals from their statements:

- Citizenship responsibility
- Recognition and social development
- Occupational development
- Communication skills
- Character development
- Cooperation
- Leadership/followership (an overall rating incorpo-

rating the other dimensions)

Smith et al. (1984) found that both students and advisors across all five organizations agreed that students' experiences in their organizations were consistent with these goals. Studies of DECA and other CTSOs support Smith et al.'s conclusions (Alfeld et al., 2007; Clark, 2005; Duke & Palmer-Schuyler, 2014; Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997). These studies do not necessarily distinguish between mere participation in CTSOs and participation on their sponsored competitions. However, the literature on intercollegiate business competitions suggests that they address many of the same objectives (Duke & Palmer-Schuyler, 2014; Ross & Byrd, 2011).

Cast against this background information, our paper presents a case study of how a university developed its DECA program, and its participation in DECA Collegiate Competitions. It was part of a larger strategy to enhance the experiential component of the School's pedagogical initiatives and to gain recognition for the University, thus providing reputa-

tional leverage for student recruitment, placement, hiring, and funding activities.

For convenience, we will refer to the University where the case study was conducted simply as DSU. The study will begin with a detailed description of the DECA program and the School's involvement. It will then discuss the implementation of the DECA strategy, along with the results. Finally, it will discuss the theoretical rationale behind the DECA initiative and other accompanying strategic initiatives, drawing conclusions regarding what it might offer for other schools.

## THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE DECA COMPETITIONS

As noted in the introduction to this paper, DECA is only one of many CTSOs, a number of which sponsor intercollegiate competitions. DECA stands out as a particularly useful model, both because of its scope and the fact that

### EXHIBIT 1 LIST OF EVENTS FOR THE CDC AND ICDC COMPETITIONS

## OFFICIAL COMPETITIVE EVENTS LIST



**THE FOLLOWING EVENTS ARE BEING OFFERED FOR THE 2015-2016 MEMBERSHIP YEAR.**

<b>BUSINESS SIMULATIONS</b>	
1. Accounting	
2. Banking Financial Services	
3. Corporate Finance	
4. Fashion Merchandising and Marketing	
5. Hotel and Lodging	
6. Restaurant and Food Service Management	
7. Retail Management	
8. Travel and Tourism	
<i>NOTE: Business Simulations include one role-play and a comprehensive exam in the evaluation process.</i>	
<b>CASE STUDIES</b>	
1. Business Ethics	Team of two (2) participants
2. Business-to-Business Marketing	Team of two (2) participants
3. Event Planning	Team of two (2) participants
4. Financial Statement Analysis	Team of two (2) participants
5. Human Resource Management	One (1) participant
6. International Marketing	Team of two (2) participants
7. Marketing Management	One (1) participant
8. Sales Management Meeting	One (1) participant
9. Sports and Entertainment Marketing	Team of two (2) participants
<i>NOTE: Case Studies include one presentation activity in the evaluation process.</i>	
<b>PREPARED BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS</b>	
1. Advertising Campaign	One (1) to three (3) participants
2. Business Research	One (1) to three (3) participants
3. Emerging Technology Marketing Strategies	One (1) or two (2) participants
4. Entrepreneurship (Starting a Business)	One (1) to three (3) participants
5. Entrepreneurship (Growing Your Business)	One (1) to three (3) participants
6. Professional Sales	One (1) participant

it has provided the focus for a number of CTSO studies (Alfeld et al., 2007; Clark, 2005; Duke & Palmer-Schuyler, 2014; Huff, 2003; Pimentel, 2014; Smith et al., 1984). While DECA's collegiate competition constitutes only one part of its total activities, it is both highly visible and impactful on the lives of the students who participate. Furthermore, its objectives are very much aligned with those identified in Smith et al.'s (1984) study of DECA advisors and student participants, as listed above. It seeks to help students become academically prepared, community oriented, professionally responsible, and experienced leaders. The specific events in their collegiate competition promote competence, innovation, integrity, and teamwork (DECA, 2015-2016).

At the university level, DECA activities center on preparations for the annual Collegiate DECA's Competitive Events Program, culminating in a regional Career Development Conference (CDC) competition. In 2015, the regional competitions involved a total of approximately 15,000 collegiate DECA students (see <http://www.deca.org/about/>). The competition consists of a highly structured series of events within 22-25 different event categories. (See Exhibit 1, reflecting 2015-16). Following the CDC competitions, qualifying teams move on to the International Career Development Conference (ICDC) competition. In 2015, this involved approximately 1,300 of the original 15,000 regional competitors (see <http://www.deca.org/about/>).

The actual administration of the DECA program at the local level will vary, depending on the structure and level of the support provided by the college or university. In the case of DSU, budgets were limited during the five years of the study, and the university's administration provided some support, however in the last year of the study, there was virtually no support beyond the allocation of salaries to the advisors for teaching the courses associated with the DECA program (two one-credit courses addressing "leadership" and "skills").

Given the limited amount of internal funding, campus DECA club activities included substantial fund-raising efforts to pay for travel and accommodations at the CDC and ICDC competitions. In order to achieve synergy and economize on students' time the advisors worked with the students to arrange service and consulting activities through which the students could learn while engaging in their fund-raising efforts. In 2015, the students raised over \$30,000 to support their participation in the CDC and ICDC competitions.

Notwithstanding increasing enrollments in the campus DECA club, the university was not able to field qualified teams to compete in all of the categories described in Ex-

hibit 1. Furthermore, given the practical difficulties of fundraising, fielding a full set of teams was not feasible. This meant that the DECA advisors had to develop a strategy for deciding which category competitions to enter and which students to encourage to enter. The process involved many of the same activities and issues an athletic coach faces when recruiting athletes, deciding who to play, and what position they should play. Conceivably, a DECA program could develop a relatively well organized recruiting network, drawing students from high school DECA programs, analogous to what we see in athletic recruiting. The university's program had not progressed to this point during the period studied in this case analysis. DECA club recruiting was accomplished primarily by word-of-mouth, where DECA students and interested faculty members mentioned it to potentially interested students. Once students were involved in the DECA club, the advisors focused on getting to know each member, encouraging the most promising students to take part in the competitions.

## A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Prior to supporting a CTSO activity, a college or university will typically have either an explicit or implicit strategy to justify the investment the support will require. At the very least, the support will involve a general desire to enhance the educational experience of the students. This is reflected in the articles describing the outcomes of DECA programs, most of which describe objectives and/or outcomes of DECA activities. Most of these address benefits to students (Alfeld et al., 2007; Clark, 2005; Duke & Palmer-Schuyler, 2014; Smith et al., 1984). However, a study by Pimentel (2014) discusses the role of DECA in student recruitment, suggesting a direct benefit to the school rather than the students.

In this case, the strategy was twofold, addressing both the students and the university. First, it represented a deliberate attempt to incorporate an experiential component into the curriculum. Following, Lewin's (1946) theory of behavioral change, later expressed in Kolb's (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, 2014; Kolb, 1984) theory of experiential learning, the initiative sought to provide students with regular experience in applying the principles they learned, then encourage them to engage in a cycle of reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. This would not only give them a better grasp of the practical knowledge and skills they were studying, but the generalized process would be applicable to new situations as well (Cannon, Geddes, & Feinstein, 2014).

Second, the DECA strategy benefits the university,

## EXHIBIT 2 FIVE-YEAR SUMMARY OF STUDENT EVALUATION ITEMS RELATING TO MENTORING BY DECA ADVISORS EVALUATIVE ITEM

	<i>Score (4.0 scale)</i>
• Instructor's out-of-class assignments help me understand course content	3.91
• Instructor provided helpful feedback on graded assignments	3.91
• Instructor's explanations and/or demonstrations were clear	3.92
• Instructor attempted to be fair and respectful of students in class	3.94
• I respect this instructor as a source of information in this field	3.95
• Overall, the class increased my knowledge confidence and/or abilities in this area	3.95

not only by helping students, but by gaining recognition for its teaching effectiveness, which, in turn, enhances its ability to recruit (Pimentel, 2014). In a more general sense, the recognition lowers the cost of recruiting both students and faculty, facilitates fundraising efforts, and helps justify better funding as a state institution. Just as DECA provides support for a larger experiential learning initiative, its

reputation for excellence supports a larger effort toward developing and publicizing educational initiatives that gain national recognition and help establish the University's reputation for excellence. In this sense, from the university's perspective, DECA provides a model for experiential learning within the university itself, where faculty and administrators experiment with, observe, reflect upon, theorize about, and revise their programs. They study and write about the results, not only creating a cycle of continuous improvement, but also creating a stream of research aimed at developing the university's reputation for academic excellence.

### THE PEDAGOGY OF DECA

The literature suggests two complementary approaches to the coaching process for collegiate competitions. Reed (1979) and Huff (2003) describe what might be characterized as a "study-and-practice" (SAP) approach, providing students with practice exercises, trial, critique, and more practice.

Duke and Palmer-Schuyler (2014) describe a different approach, emphasizing the importance of "mentoring" to develop "psychological capital" (what we will call the MPC model). Psychological capital consists of (a) self-efficacy, or self-confidence; (b) optimism, or feeling that one is making a positive contribution; (c) hope, or the ability to persevere

toward goals, and, if necessary, redirect paths to goals in order to succeed; and (d) resilience, or the ability to bounce back when beset by problems (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010).

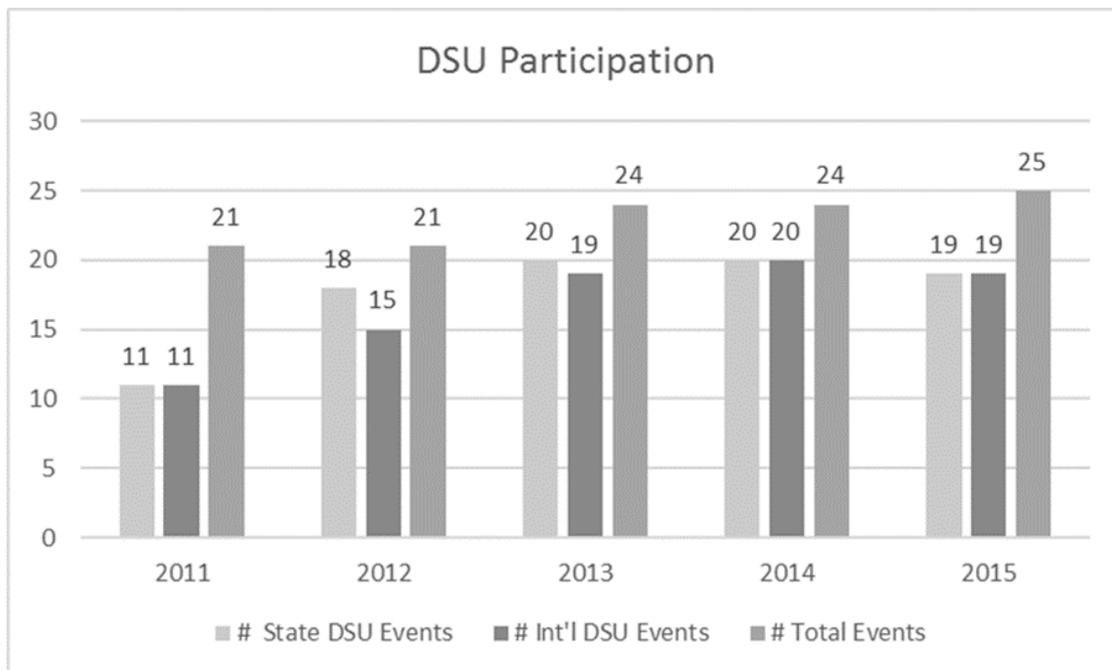
According to Rogers, Monteiro, and Nora (2008), mentoring consists of (1) the encouragement of personal exploration of one's core values (personal exploration); (2) practical guidance toward career planning and growth (practical guidance); (3) providing close collaborative relationships and support (support); and (4) providing professional advice (advice).

### The Study-and-Practice (SAP) Model

Both the SAP and MPC approaches played a role in the DECA pedagogical strategy. First, addressing the SAP approach, the preparation reflected the philosophy articulated by Cannon and his colleagues in a series of papers addressing the role of simulations in experiential learning. The first paper, addressed what the authors characterized as the "simplicity paradox" (Cannon, Friesen, Lawrence, & Feinstein, 2009). It draws on an earlier paper by Cannon (1995) suggesting that managers, and by extension, students seeking to manage in a simulated business environment address the overwhelming number of variables they need to consider by "chunking" them into strategic patterns. The "simplicity paradox" is that finding the proper simplifying strategy to address a particular situation is itself a very complex and difficult process for students to master.

In a follow-up paper, Cannon, Feinstein, and Friesen (2010) apply the "conscious-competence" model to experiential learning. The model, suggests that students facing a new problem begin from a state of *unconscious incompetence*, leading to disconfirmation in their problem-solving attempts, or *conscious incompetence*. Realizing that that they didn't

**EXHIBIT 3  
UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION IN CDC  
AND ICDC COMPETITIONS FOR EACH OF FIVE YEARS**



really understand the situation, they look to the materials they have studied for a better solution. This is helpful, leading them to a kind of un-nuanced, mechanical *conscious competence*. The problem, of course, is that the theories and concepts they have studied abstractions and never completely aligned with the demands of a specific problem. Through repeated application of the model to different but similar problems, they accumulate increasing problem-solving insight, ultimately giving them an instinctive ability to adjust their knowledge to address new situational requirements, or what the model terms *unconscious competence*.

Each of these studies was implicitly grounded in Kolb's (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, 2014; Kolb, 1984) theory of experiential learning. According to his theory, students learn by experiencing an actual problem, reflecting on the experience, theorizing about why things happened as they did, and experimenting to see if they can improve their solution. This begins a new cycle of learning.

Holman, Pavlica, and Thorpe (1997) argue that Kolb's approach falls short for its failure to properly consider the impact of social, historical, and cultural factors that influence the linear sequence of experimentation, especially in practical management decision-making situations. Kim (1993) addresses a similar issue, casting individual experiential learning in the larger context of organizational learning, in which problem-solving is constrained by the culture, roles, and specific tasks of the organizational environment.

Building on Kim's work, Cannon, Friesen, Feinstein, and Yaprak (2013) discuss the role of simulations in providing an environment in which students can experience the kind of constrained decision-making discussed by Kim. The SAP model immerses students in a series of practice exercises, giving them a chance to apply the Kolbian cycle in a number of different simulated management settings, thus leading to the kind of *unconscious competence* discussed by Cannon, Feinstein, and Friesen (2010).

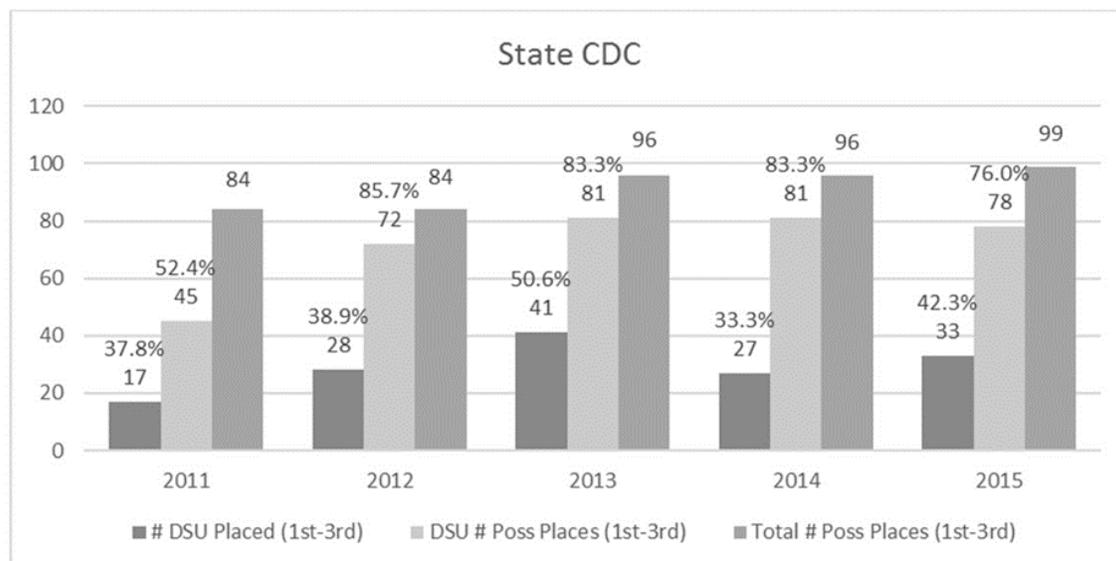
In their implementation of the SAP approach, the University's DECA team worked through the Business School

to create three different venues:

- Using projects and/or cases from past DECA competitions as core assignments throughout the School's curriculum. These included specific assignments within the general categories outlined in Exhibit 1. As a practical matter, the DECA advisor works with faculty members who teach classes where a DECA project or case might be appropriate to elicit the instructor's support and then to help the instructor fit the project or case into his or her teaching plan.
- Participating in a for-credit DECA class that focuses on developing leadership skills in the students and provides the opportunity to both observe and practice these skills through community networking, service, and out-of-classroom learning experiences/projects. The course features guest speakers from the business community who describe their own educational and professional experiences as they relate to the specific categories of DECA events. The class also takes field trips to listen to and observe the way community business leaders practice their skills. Students also attend an annual DECA leadership conference where they are again exposed to guest speakers who address leadership in the context of DECA event categories. Service activities provide an opportunity for students to practice their leadership skills administering and working in various school and community service projects.
- Participating in a for-credit DECA skills class where students' focus on the specific skills needed to succeed in the DECA competitions. They learn the steps of problem-solving, use those steps to solve issues in real-to-life case studies extracted from a variety of DECA events, develop and practice the presentation skills needed to present their solutions, and build the self-confidence they need to perform well in the actual DECA competition.

In addition to these three formal venues, the campus

#### EXHIBIT 4 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PLACING FIRST, SECOND, OR THIRD IN THEIR EVENTS IN CDC COMPETITIONS FOR EACH OF FIVE YEARS



DECA club meets regularly to discuss issue and practice for the DECA competition. Typically, a meeting would focus on doing a case study, using a structured six-step “IBECIF” approach:

1. Identify the problem(s)
2. Brainstorm possible solutions
3. Evaluation strengths and weaknesses of the solutions
4. Choose the best solution
5. Implement the solution in a formal presentation
6. Follow up with a closing statement in the presentation identifying any future steps or commitments

The students address the case “in role” as a project manager, consultant, or any other role that might be specified in the case. In steps 1 through 4, “role” is less important, because the steps involve working with a team of fellow students to solve the case. However, in steps 5 and 6, a student will be making an actual presentation to someone representing a DECA competition judge. In these steps the student must not only stay “in role,” but also play the role convincingly. It is not enough to have a good “solution.” In the DECA competition, judges will also evaluate the professionalism with which the solution is presented.

DECA events that use business simulations (events 1-8 listed under “Business Simulations” in Exhibit 1) all have a comprehensive exam associated with the competition. Past exams are available to DECA advisors. Students also do practice exams as part of their participation in DECA meetings.

In order to help the DECA competitors see things from a judge’s perspective, the School has DECA club members serve as judges for high school DECA competitions. This practice has proven very effective in preparing the School’s DECA members for their own regional and international collegiate competitions.

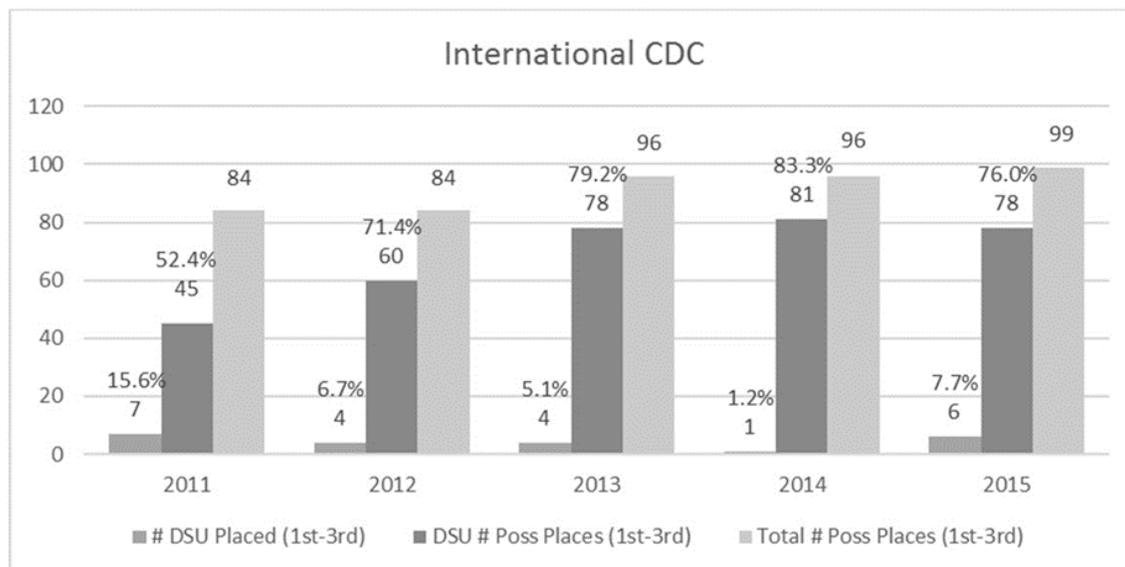
### The Mentoring/Psychological-Capital (MPC) Model

The application of the MPC model of preparation is more subtle and difficult to apply than the SAP approach. It does not involve specific exercises, but rather, particular types of interaction between faculty mentors and the students. The purpose of the interactions is to empower students to take charge of their own education and achievement. Geddes, Cannon, Cannon and Feinstein (2015) cast this as an application of service-dominant logic (S-D logic) from Marketing, where educators are marketers, and students are their customers. According to (S-D logic), marketers do not supply products and services, but resources (sometimes embodied in products and services) that mobilize customer resources. The outcome is an interaction of marketer with customer resources that results in a co-creation of customer satisfaction (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2014; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008).

The profundity of S-D logic becomes apparent when contrasting the SAP with the MPC approaches to coaching. In the SAP model, the focus is on providing structured exercises and feedback. Certainly, these constitute valuable resources for the students. However, if taken at face value, the implicit assumption would be that students are relatively passive consumers of the training program, and that the content of the program is the only relevant outcome. In fact, the effectiveness of the training will vary dramatically with the advisor and the student, even if the nature of the assignments remains the same. Furthermore, the content (knowledge portion) of the program is only part of what students need to succeed in the competition. Students need a feeling of competence, commitment, and enthusiasm resulting from their belief in the relevance of the material they are presenting. This comes across in subtle ways, lending credibility to their presentations.

This is where the power of mentoring and psychological capital comes in. As noted earlier, mentoring consists of inspiring students toward personal exploration, providing practical career guidance, being psychologically and emo-

**EXHIBIT 5  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PLACING FIRST, SECOND, OR THIRD  
IN THEIR EVENTS IN ICDC COMPETITIONS FOR EACH OF FIVE YEARS**



tionally supportive, and providing useful practical advice (Rogers et al., 2008). If done properly, these mentoring activities will build students' psychological capital, giving them a sense of self-confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans et al., 2010). These become resources that are internal to the students, enabling them to present themselves convincingly. Strong mentoring provides the additional guidance needed for the students to apply their personal resources in the proper direction. In the case of DECA competitions, this direction calls for the practice exercises and actual competitive activities.

Feedback from DECA students in the form of formal course evaluations suggest that the DECA advisors score well on the items that appear to reflect mentoring characteristics. Exhibit 2 shows the average evaluations over the past five years. Verbatim transcripts from the student evaluations and other student comments support the notion that the DECA advisors inspired students toward personal exploration, provided practical career guidance, were psychologically and emotionally supportive, and offered practical advice. They also appeared to inspire a sense of self-confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Although no formal controls or research design were built into the DECA program during the five years examined in this case study, the DECA club had a long-standing presence on campus. Beginning in the 2010-2011 academic year, when the strategy and activities described in the study took effect, the program took on a new life. After 2010 enrollment in the DECA club grew dramatically, and the School consistently fielded a broader range of teams across the com-

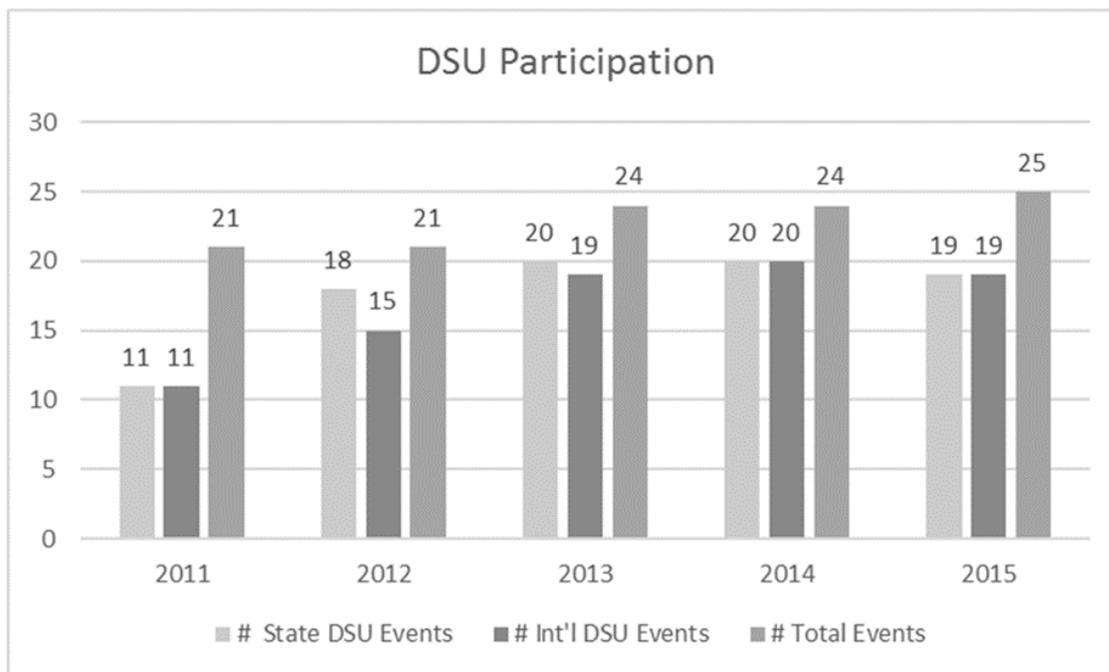
petitive categories. The actual competitions took place in the second semester of each year. Exhibits 3-6 summarizes the events in which the University teams participated for each of the five years being studied.

Exhibits 4 and 5 show the number of the University's students placing first, second, or third in their state (regional CDC) and international CDC events for each of the five years. For instance, in 2011, 17 students placed first second or third in their events in the CDC competition. The third column indicates that there were 84 first, second, or third places available, suggesting that the university's team won (17/84 =) 20.2 percent, or about one out of every five places available. However, given that the university didn't participate in every event category, only 45 of the 84 places (52.4 percent) were available to the university's team, so the university team won (17/45 =) 37.8 percent of the places available to it, more than one out of every three.

Clearly, the international (ICDC) competition is much more competitive. Even so, the university's team won 15.6 percent of the places available to it in 2011. In subsequent years, the percentages went down, but the differences in percentages were not statistically meaningful, given the small number of university students placing at the international level. Given the number of students competing and the quality of the schools represented, placing any students at the international level is an impressive achievement.

The quality of students competing at both the CDC and ICDC levels merits more attention. DSU is a new and relatively small state university (having previously been a two-year college) with open admission standards. While the university attracts some very good students, the overall academic qualifications of its students do not compare favorably with many, if not the majority, of its competitors. This is relevant to our analysis because it speaks to the quality of the DECA program we are analyzing. Drawing again on the

**EXHIBIT 6**  
**NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PLACING IN THE TOP 10% OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE CDC AND ICDC COMPETITIONS FOR EACH OF FIVE YEARS**



analogy of coaching in athletic events, winning requires both talent and a solid program. Talent varies by year across all competing schools, although the nature of the programs tend to be more stable. The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether the program we are studying might provide a useful model for other schools.

One way to evaluate program quality (as opposed to individual students) is to focus on overall team performance rather than winning a limited number of places in each event. How well do all the University's competing students do on the average? Exhibit 6 addresses this question. It shows the percentage of the University's students that placed in the top 10 percent of all the contestants in their event. The results provide strong evidence in support of the program's quality, placing virtually all of its students in the top 10% at the state level and placing from 6 to 65 percent of them in the top 10 percent at the international level.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to present a case study of a highly successful collegiate DECA program, using it to illustrate how experiential business competitions can contribute both to student learning and as a source of recruiting and fund-raising leverage for the university. The study addressed a five year period in which the University's DECA program was transformed from a small campus club to a state and national/international player in DECA's collegiate competition. While DECA plays a prominent role among intercollegiate business competitions, it is an example of a larger category of *career and technical student organizations* (CTSOs) that operate independently of any particular college or university, many of which sponsor competitions.

Two things make this particular case study unusual and convincing: First, the University's program dramatically improved by stricter adherence to a model of success, capturing 37.8 percent of the first, second, and third place awards available to it in the first year at the state level and 15.6 percent at the national/international level. It continued this level of performance for the entire five-year period, winning an average of 40.6 percent of the available awards at the state level and 7.3 percent at the national/international level. Even more impressive was the overall team performance, with an average of 98.2 percent of the university's team members scoring in the top 10 percent of contestants in their particular events at the state level and 32.6 percent at the national level.

The second thing that makes the study unusual and

convincing is the fact that the University is relatively new, having spent most of its more than a century of existence as a two-year institution. While it is growing rapidly, it is smaller than most of the other major universities in the state and it is not selective in its admissions policies. This suggests that the performance of its DECA competitors is probably due to the nature of the program rather than its ability to attract higher achieving students.

At the student level, the program appears to have adopted the "best practices" for preparing students for the competition, as described in the literature, or what we have characterized as the "study and practice" (SAP) model (Reed, 1979; Huff, 2003). While this appears to be critical to the success of the program, it represents the standard approach to preparing for business competitions, as suggested by a review of web postings coming from a Google search using "how to prepare for case competitions."

A second "best practice" approach is what we characterize as the "mentoring/psychological capital" model (Duke & Palmer-Schuyler, 2014). This approach leverages the relationship between the teacher/mentor and the student to build the student's motivation and confidence. In this sense, it is similar to Geddes et al.'s (2015) concept of transformational education. Rather than viewing the instructor solely as a source of knowledge, the instructor becomes a catalyst for the student's learning, or "co-creation" of education. While SAP is a relatively standardized approach, MPC is much more of an interpersonal art, varying substantially from instructor to instructor, from student to student, and situation to situation. Notwithstanding the individualized nature of the way MPC is applied, it does feature standard elements, such as deep caring and respect for each student as an individual, positive feedback and encouragement, and the ability to inspire confidence and trust, backed up by sound advice to the student.

Our own subjective judgment regarding this case study is that a solid program of SAP provided a necessary, but not sufficient, element of DSU's DECA success. However, the critical element was an effective implementation of MCP. This suggests that universities should invest heavily in developing MCP skills among its faculty.

A final general note regarding the case as it relates to the role of DECA and CTSO competitions: They provide a way for otherwise unknown schools to garner a national or international reputation. In DSU's case, the performance described in this paper led to one of the advisors being named "Best Advisor" by DECA International. This type of recognition can be used as leverage for validating a school's program, leading to more effective student and faculty recruitment, fund-raising, and state support (in the case of state institutions).

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