

Sloan-C Workshop

Blended Learning in Higher Education

University of Illinois at Chicago

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# Blended Learning MBA Program

*Growing Pains, Challenges and Solutions*



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# Babson College

Wellesley, Massachusetts

- Small, private college with business focus
- Founded in 1919 in Wellesley, MA (20 miles west of Boston)
- Integrated case-based teaching approach



**BABSON**  
MBA





# Babson College

Wellesley, Massachusetts

## *Three Schools*

**Undergraduate School**  
(1700 students)

**F. W. Olin Graduate  
School of Business**  
(1700 full and  
part-time students)

**Babson Executive Education**



**BABSON**  
MBA

# **There Aren't Many Ideas Babson Doesn't Like!**

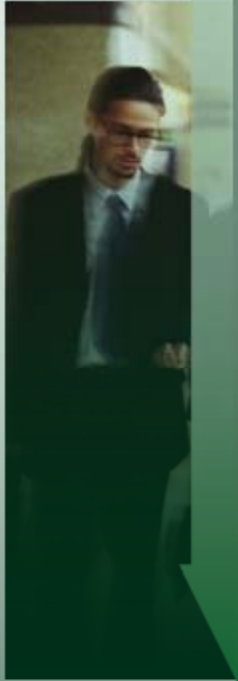
- **Babson is known for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**
  - We don't just preach it, we practice it!
- **Lucky to have many thought leaders on campus**
  - Provost at the time was a huge supporter
  - Faculty were willing to take risks
  - Senior administration believed we could 'do this' and made resources available
  - Started our blended program ahead of our competitors



# Extending Babson

- **Fast Track MBA was created to extend the Babson brand**
  - Not just to increase student enrollments
  - Not to save classroom space
- **Blended...non 'Online'**
  - Babson faculty and teaching experiences are what makes Babson great
  - Blended learning supports Babson greatness
  - Initially faculty willing to take existing MBA program and blend it – comfort with content, new delivery method
  - Senior administration understood blended program requires ongoing support and enhancements





*24 Month Fast  
Track Curriculum*

# **BLENDED MBA PROGRAM DESIGN**

- Started in 1999, partnership with Intel Corporation
  - Logistics: face-to-face classes  
2 full days (Fri-Sat), approximately once every six weeks
  - Remainder of course work done via web-based platform individually and in groups: discussion boards, blogs, wikis, interactive syllabus, virtual team meetings, assignments and exams
- Original blended curriculum design modeled after Babson's flagship integrated full-time Two-Year MBA Program

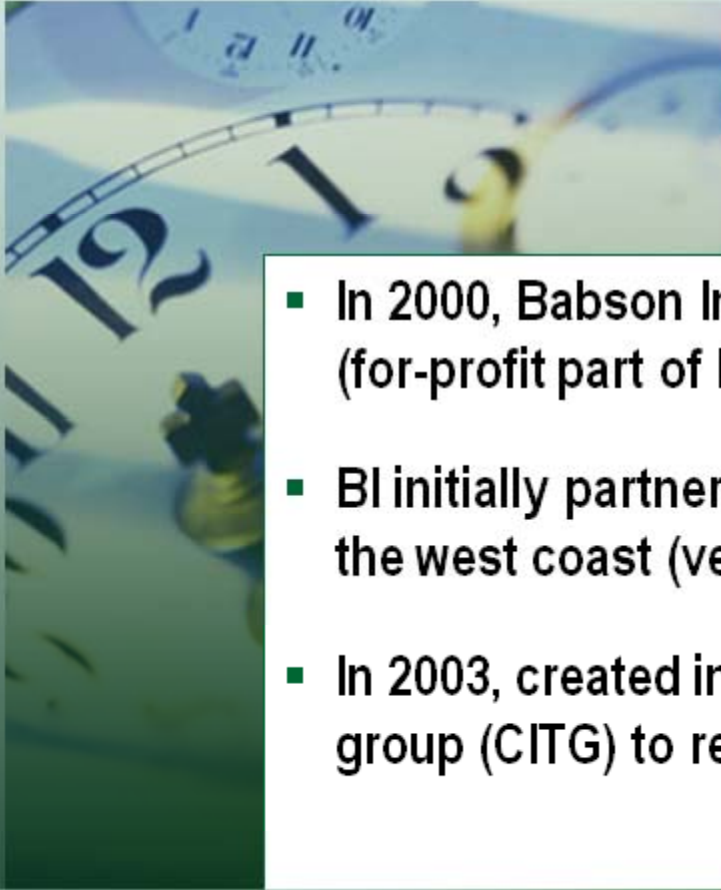


*How Do We Do It?*  
**Growing Pains**



- Originally, the leadership of Babson was not involved in the blended learning initiative
- Today, 9 years later, we are fully supported

*How Do We Do It?*  
**Growing Pains**



- In 2000, Babson Interactive (BI), LLC, was created (for-profit part of Babson)
- BI initially partnered with a technology group on the west coast (vendor)
- In 2003, created in-house curriculum technology group (CITG) to replace vendor



**BABSON**

CURRICULUM INNOVATION AND  
TECHNOLOGY GROUP



*How Do We Do It?*

## **Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions**

### **Challenge**

Taking a 1.5-hour, typical integrated F2F case-based class discussion and expanding to one, 6-day session in the online environment

- ✓ Distance education generally requires more advanced planning
- ✓ Faculty guidelines have been created

### **Solution**



*How Do We Do It?*

## **Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions**

**challenge**

Ensure that faculty are equally engaged with their distance students as they are with their on-campus students

- ✓ Offer blended learning to be taught “on-load”

**Solution**



*How Do We Do It?*

## **Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions**

**challenge**

Make these students feel part of the Babson community even though they are only on campus once a month

- ✓ Hire additional support staff
- ✓ Work with student service departments on campus (*IT support, bookstore, library, etc.*)

**Solution**



*How Do We Do It?*

# Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions

**challenge**

Offer most effective method(s) for delivering a blended program for students and faculty



- ✓ Students and faculty participate asynchronously on discussion board forums
- ✓ Keep up-to-date on assignments using the interactive syllabus
- ✓ Students collaborate weekly with their groups using the “group spaces” feature, and includes access to SharePoint, Wikis, Blogs

**SOLUTION**



*How Do We Do It?*

## **Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions**

### **Challenge**

Relieve faculty increased workload and address the issue that blended courses take more time

- ✓ Holding blended learning seminars for faculty twice a month
- ✓ Blended MBA program, opened doors to faculty who regularly travel around the world teaching and could not be in classroom
- ✓ Many lead faculty have been able to maintain their current teaching load and teach in Fast Track due to the flexibility of the program

### **Solution**



*How Do We Do It?*

## **Facing Challenges & Finding Solutions**

### **challenge**

Online management of lively, yet lengthy, discussion boards can become cumbersome to read

- ✓ Divide the class of 50 students into sub-groups of 25, students do not feel lost in the online conversation and are able to be heard.
- ✓ “Warm-calling” on students or groups

### **Solution**





# Where Are We Now & Where Are We Going?

- **Currently we have 470 students, in 10 sections, four different phases of curriculum, on Babson campus and in Portland, Oregon**
- **Redesigned curriculum in Fall 2005 and launched in Fall 2006**
  - 40% F2F, 60% online (from 50% F2F, 50% online)
  - Curriculum and program designed as blended from the start – not taken from F2F and blended
- **As the program grows, resources get narrower**
  - New faculty need to teach and need to be oriented
  - Babson certification program for blended teaching
  - Faculty 'shadow' partnerships
- **College is discussing how to grow the program further**
  - Adding sections to current cohorts?
  - Adding another location nationally? Globally?
  - Partner with other schools and deliver on their campus?



# Fast Track Team: Awards and Accolades



*Winner*

2006 IT Leadership Award for Pedagogy and IT Practice  
*Private Institution*



MASS  
TECHNOLOGY  
LEADERSHIP  
COUNCIL

*Winner*

2006 Technology Buyer/User  
*State-of-the-art eLearning platform*



INNOVATION IS OUR TRADITION



Get  
the  
Edge



**Fast Track**

*Babson's innovative MBA program for working professionals*



*"The essence of  
management is to  
make knowledge  
productive."  
- Peter Drucker*

# Questions?

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