Proposal of Case Organization

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OLIT 514: Theory and Practice of Organizational Learning

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1 Initiatives #2 and #3 were written in collaboration with other group members.
The Office of Graduate Studies

As the central graduate academic administrative unit at the University of New Mexico, the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) promotes the success of graduate students and graduate programs by providing broad oversight of program quality, managing academic policies, and administering financial support in the form of assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, grants and awards. OGS collaborates with UNM administrators, faculty, graduate students, and staff to promote the completion of degrees, to encourage best practices in graduate education, to diversify access to graduate education, and to reward graduate students and graduate faculty who set examples of excellence. OGS also provides administrative and financial support for the Graduate Resource Center (GRC), the Project for the New Mexico Graduates of Color (PNMGC), and the Teaching Assistant Resource Center (TARC).

OGS provides guidance for progress toward degrees, submission of theses and dissertations, and graduation requirements. OGS processes and manages graduate assistantship contracts, reviews programs of studies and applications for candidacy, and maintains graduate students’ academic records. OGS does not process graduate applications but it works collaboratively with Enrollment Management (which includes Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar) and with departments during the admission process. OGS also collaborates with Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) to manage health care insurance for graduate students.

OGS holds monthly meetings with graduate advisers from all graduate programs and departments to share information and ideas, streamline processes and procedures, and keep the UNM graduate community informed about deadlines for scholarships and fellowships. It also coordinates with UNM’s graduate student organizations—the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA), Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color (PNMGC) and others—to
ensure that graduate students have a voice in the services provided to programs and students.

OGS faculty and staff want the graduate student experience at UNM to be rewarding, enjoyable, and productive.

**OGS Fact Book**

Through the Office of Graduate Studies, UNM offers 66 Master’s degree programs, 4 master of Fine Arts degree programs, 40 Doctoral degree programs, and 11 transcripted certificate degree programs. The Fall 2012 graduate student body comprised 4,526 students:

- 42.39% male
- 57.61% female
- 69% New Mexico resident
- 31% non-resident
- 12.28% international
- 31.66% from under-represented populations: 23.46% Hispanic, 1.75% African-American, 3.89% Native American, 2.41% Asian
- 49% full-time/51% part-time

In AY 2011-12, 1153 graduate degrees were awarded:

- 202 doctoral degrees
- 11 post-doctoral certificates
- 903 master's degrees
- 21 Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees
- 2 graduate certificates
- 12 Education Specialist degrees
- 2 post-master's nursing certificates
**Location and Contact**

The Office of Graduate Studies is located in the heart of the UNM main campus (between Central Blvd. and Lomas Blvd., and east of University Blvd.) in the Humanities Building, suite 107. The building is directly west of the Student Union Building (SUB) and directly south of Zimmerman Library.

![Location Image](image)

*Figure 2*

**Internal Contact**

*Felipe Palmeira Amaral, Multimedia Assistant and Webmaster*

This position supports the Dean of Graduate Studies in developing and maintaining OGS communications, including e-mail, Facebook, Twitter; upgrading and regularly updating the OGS website; and providing administrative support focused particularly upon the scheduling of orientation and training meetings and workshops for graduate students and for graduate advisors (the OGSNet). It also assists OGS and the Graduate Resource Center in producing learning objects and web-based interactive instructional materials to provide asynchronous learning opportunities in best practices for graduate teaching, academic integrity, and other issues vital to graduate education.
Needs Assessment – Marquardt’s LOP

Learning Dynamics: Individual, Group or Team, and Organizational

In this organization . . .

2. We see continuous learning by all employees as a high business priority.

3. We are encouraged and expected to manage our own learning and development.

3. People avoid distorting information and blocking communication channels by actively listening to others and providing them with effective feedback.

2. Individuals are trained and coached in learning how to learn.

5. We use various accelerated learning methodologies (mind mapping, mnemonics, imagery, music).

2. People expand knowledge through adaptive, anticipatory, and creative learning approaches.

3. Teams and individuals use the action learning process—that is, they learn from careful reflection on the problem or situation and apply their new knowledge to future actions.

2. Teams are encouraged to learn from one another and share what they learn in a variety of ways (via communities of practice, social networks such as LinkedIn, and electronic bulletin boards such as Blackboard).

3. People are able to think and act with a comprehensive, systems approach.

2. Teams receive training in how to work and learn in groups.

Learning Dynamics Total Score: 24

Possible Interventions

• Start a best practices campaign to encourage learning among employees.
- Promote more interaction among the different teams in the office through the implementation of collaborative projects.
- Implement a knowledge management system so that knowledge can be recorded and reused in future actions.
- Create communities of practice around some of the main projects to encourage knowledge sharing.

**Organization Transformation: Vision, Culture, Strategy, and Structure**

*In this organization . . .*

1. The importance of being a learning organization is understood throughout the company.
2. Top-level management supports the vision of a learning organization.
3. There is a climate that supports and recognizes the importance of learning.
4. We are committed to continuous learning in pursuit of improvement.
5. We learn from failures as well as successes, which means that mistakes are tolerated.
6. We reward people and teams for learning and helping others learn.
7. Learning opportunities are incorporated into operations and programs.
8. We design ways to share knowledge and enhance learning throughout the organization (systematic job rotation across divisions, structured on-the-job learning systems).
9. The organization is streamlined, with few levels of management, to maximize the communication and learning across levels.
10. We coordinate our efforts across departments on the basis of common goals and learnings, rather than maintaining fixed departmental boundaries.

*Organization Transformation Total Score: 29*
Possible Interventions

- Institute a rewards system to promote mutual help between different teams and individual employees.
- Use the office’s website and shared drive as shared knowledge repositories to enhance learning.
- Investigate the possibility of eliminating fixed department boundaries to promote more interaction and reach common goals.

People Empowerment: Manager, Employee, Customer, Partners, Suppliers, and Community

In this organization . . .

1. We strive to develop an empowered workforce that is able to learn and perform.
2. Authority is decentralized and delegated in proportion to responsibility and learning capability.
3. Managers and nonmanagers work in partnership to learn and solve problems together.
4. Managers take on the roles of coaches, mentors, and facilitators of learning.
5. Managers generate and enhance learning opportunities as well as encourage experimentation and reflection on new knowledge so that it can be used.
6. We actively share information with our customers and at the same time obtain their ideas and input in order to learn and improve services and products.
7. We give customers and suppliers opportunities to participate in learning and training products.
8. Learning from partners (subcontractors, teammates) is maximized through upfront planning of resources and strategies devoted to knowledge and skill acquisition.
3. We participate in learning events with suppliers, community groups, professional associations, and academic institutions.

4. We actively seek learning partners among customers, vendors, and suppliers.

_People Empowerment Total Score: 32_

**Possible Interventions**

- Develop training for managers and team leaders to act as mentors and have them encourage creative approaches to problem solving.

- Promote a feedback system through the office’s website to gather customer input and improve services.

- Promote a “request for partnership” system through the office’s website so that other organizations on campus can easily reach out for collaboration.

**Knowledge Management: Acquisition, Creation, Storage, Retrieval, Transfer, and Utilization**

_In this organization . . ._

1. We actively seek information that improves the work of the organization by incorporating products and/or processes that are outside our function.

2. We have accessible systems for collecting internal and external information.

3. We monitor trends outside our organization by looking at what others do; this includes benchmarking best practices, attending conferences, and examining published research.

4. People are trained in the skills of creative thinking, innovation, and experimentation.

5. We often create demonstration projects as a means of testing new ways of developing a product and/or delivering a service.
6. We have developed systems and structures to ensure that important knowledge is coded, stored, and made available to those who need and can use it.

7. People are aware of the need to retain important organizational learning and share such knowledge with others.

8. Cross-functional teams are used to transfer important learning across groups, departments, and divisions.

9. We continue to develop new strategies and mechanisms for sharing learning throughout the organization.

10. We support specific areas, units, and projects that generate knowledge by providing people with learning opportunities.

Knowledge management Total Score: 27

Possible Interventions

- Develop short tutorials on innovative learning and thinking and make these available in the office’s intranet.
- Establish a testing system to access the effectiveness of the office’s current processes and procedures.
- Change the office’s business culture to one that promotes the sharing of knowledge and best practices.

Technology Application: Knowledge Information Systems, Technology-Based Learning, and Electronic Performance Support Systems

In this organization . . .

1. Learning is facilitated by effective and efficient computer-based information systems.
2. People have ready access to the information highway via, for example, local area networks, the Internet, and an intranet.

3. Learning facilities incorporate electronic multimedia support and an environment based on the powerful integration of art, color, music, and visuals.

4. Computer-assisted learning programs and electronic job aids (just-in-time and flowcharting software) are readily available.

5. We use groupware technology to manage group processes such as project, team, and meeting management.

6. We support just-in-time learning, a system that integrates high-tech learning systems, coaching, and actual work on the job into a single process.

7. Technology is maximized to allow the organization to capture, store, and transfer knowledge.

8. We design and tailor our electronic performance support systems to meet our learning requirements.

9. People have full access to the technology they need to learn and to do their jobs effectively.

10. We can adapt software systems to collect, code, store, create, and transfer information in ways best suited to meet our needs.

   *Technology Application Total Score: 30*

**Possible Interventions**

- Invest on the improvement of the office’s learning facilities.
- Invest on computer-assisted learning programs.
- Use Microsoft SharePoint to allow the organization to capture, store, and transfer knowledge.

### Interventions Rank and Rational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Rational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Implement a knowledge management system so that knowledge can be recorded and reused in future actions.</td>
<td>One of the main issues in the office is that there is no systematic way to share and record knowledge. As consequence of that, employees often have to “reinvent the wheel” and to continuously create new solutions to old problems. Implementing a knowledge management system will help the office reuse knowledge and focus on creating innovative learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Institute a rewards system to promote mutual help between different teams and individual employees.</td>
<td>The office is rigorously divided into different teams and there is very little interaction between them. A rewards system would motivate these teams to interact more with each other and increase productivity and effectiveness within the office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Promote a feedback system through the office’s website to gather customer input and improve services.</td>
<td>The feedback system would allow the office to hear back from its audience (students, faculty and staff) on the different services provided and find out what is working and what needs improvement. By having this feedback easily accessed through the website the office can use this invaluable tool to improve its services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Change the office’s business culture to one that promotes the sharing of knowledge and best practices.</td>
<td>There is a strong sense of isolation and individual work in the office due to years of building such culture, therefore, before implementing many if these interventions it is necessary to change people’s views and the business culture in the office to make sure that everybody will be receptive to these changes. This is a slow process that should be implemented in stages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Invest on the improvement of the office’s learning facilities.</td>
<td>Unfortunately the office is limited by UNM’s policies and procedures as well as to its budgets constraints. That being said, it is undeniable that it could benefit from better learning facilities so it can improve as a learning organization. In order to accomplish that, alternative sources of funding would be necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this rank I selected the main interventions (one from each of the areas proposed on Marquardt's LOP) as I believe they will help spearhead the other interventions.
Project Management Plan

Felipe Palmeira Amaral: internal contact and website administrator for the knowledge management system.


Steven Deleon: rewards system designer.

Michelle Mannino: campaign manager for business culture change
Initiative #1: Implement a Knowledge Management System and Feedback Tool

Background

It is impossible to deny the importance of knowledge in an organization and the ways such knowledge can contribute to the growth of the company and consequently be turned into value. By sharing knowledge and making sure that it has good and organized knowledge sources a company can thrive by focusing on new challenges, since the solutions to old ones have been properly documented and shared. This way, workers can re-use previous knowledge and focus their efforts in the development of new and innovative solutions. Having a good Knowledge management system is all the more important in today’s world, where the constant changes in technology force companies to regularly develop new products and update both software and hardware.

One of the current issues in the Office of Graduate Studies is that there is not a system in place to share and record knowledge. The organization does have a shared drive where documents and processes are stored but the posting, using, and re-using of the knowledge assets in the shared drive does not follow any particular logic. As consequence of that, employees often have to “reinvent the wheel” and to continuously create new solutions to old problems. Implementing a Knowledge Management system will help the office reuse knowledge and focus on creating innovative learning, that is, learning that originates from collaborative work and that generates new and original solutions.

Therefore, it is safe to say the organization has an increasing need for knowledge management. Some of the reasons for this increase are: the increasing level of complexity the organization has achieved; the importance of knowledge transfer between the difference
members of the organization (especially between novices and experienced members); and the geographical barriers between workers who cannot meet face to face (branch campuses).

Cognition, on the other hand, is pretty evenly distributed, as this is an organization where each team has very specific functions in the overall process. The teams work well within each other and amongst themselves. However, there are some pockets of missing knowledge that could streamline the process and make it more efficient. Having a Knowledge Management system to keep track of the knowledge being produced in the organization is a very good option for this situation since individuals don't necessarily need to gain the knowledge to do their own jobs but simply to update that knowledge to make their jobs faster and more efficient.

Another way to achieve higher levels of effectiveness is to gather customer input. As the organization serves all graduate students at UNM, as well as faculty and staff, it would be of extreme importance to implement a feedback system. This feedback system would allow the organization to hear back from its audience on the different services provided and find out what is working and what needs improvement. By having this feedback easily accessed through the website the organization can use this invaluable tool to improve its services and effectiveness. An implementation plan for meeting these goals is outlined below.

**Implementation Plan for the OGS Knowledge Management System and Feedback Tool**

First and foremost, it is important to make the organization value its knowledge and be aware of the life cycle of knowledge. The life cycle of knowledge is the stepping-stone for an organization to build upon and start developing an ongoing methodology to analyze, design and implement improvements to performance. This is of utmost importance to this organization because the cycle becomes a spiral of knowledge that the organization can draw from: each phase (see figure 3) feeds off each other and start the cycle over. In order to develop true
innovative learning, the organization needs to understand its cycle of knowledge and make sure it is functional for the organization’s needs.

Once the Knowledge Management system is in place, the organization’s Knowledge Assets will continue to be produced as usual: the enrollment reports and demographics are preserved in Hyperion and in the office’s website. The SharePoint site will be used to store and preserve a different type of Knowledge Asset: instead of the reports themselves, all the solutions and innovative learning that lead to these reports and other office processes will be stored in the SharePoint site.

The dissemination of knowledge will have two main outlets: the office’s website (used for reports and documents of public access) and the SharePoint site, where all the internal processes and knowledge solutions can be easily accessed by staff. Having the Knowledge Assets processed, properly stored and easily accessed will then make the knowledge creation a lot easier, feeding into the first step and restarting the cycle (see figure 4).
Additionally, for the feedback tool, the organization will use a Web Content Management System (WCM, WCMS or Web CMS), that is, a content management system (CMS) software, implemented as a Web application, for creating and managing HTML content. It is used to manage and control a large, dynamic collection of Web material (HTML documents and their associated images). A WCMS facilitates content creation, content control, editing, and essential Web maintenance functions. UNM uses a web content management system (WCMS) called Cascade Server, where the feedback tool will be created (see figure 5).
Tracking the Success of this Intervention

There are five main issues the organization must consider in order to implement the Knowledge Management system: creating knowledge, capturing knowledge, organizing knowledge, sharing and distributing knowledge, using and reusing knowledge. Creating knowledge doesn't seem to be a problem in this organization. In fact, I believe that new knowledge is created on a daily basis to work the processes in the office. However, not enough
of that knowledge makes the transition from dynamic to static since many people in the organization tend to accumulate functions and concentrate knowledge on them.

Capturing knowledge, on the other hand, is definitely an issue that needs to be addressed. One of the ways of doing that is to capture the knowledge of the processes within the organization and create web-based interactive learning materials on these processes in order to have them available to their target audiences. A great part of capturing the knowledge is also organizing it in a way that outside people can understand and follow a logical process. For sharing and distributing, the organization will use its website (external knowledge) and a SharePoint site (internal knowledge).

The impact of a Knowledge Management system is measured in the way that it improves the effectiveness of an organization’s process, by the way new and old knowledge assets are created, shared, and reused as well as using statistics to monitor employee’s participation. In order to track the impact of the Knowledge Management system and the feedback tool, the organization will use SharePoint’s own reporting functions as well as Google Analytics to measure website traffic.

**Initiative #2: Institute a Rewards System**

**Background**

The Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) is rigorously divided into different teams (see figure 6) and there is very little interaction between each one. Instituting a rewards system would motivate these teams to interact more with each other and increase productivity and effectiveness within the OGS. Promoting mutual help between the different teams and individual employees is the primary focus of this particular initiative. Changing the culture of the organization to include rewards that help facilitate team learning among the various, divided teams will be difficult at
first. However, once this initiative is in place, the organization will begin to experience the benefits of how a rewards system can increase productivity and interaction.

Learning organizations provide a facilitative climate that encourages and prizes learning. Learners are the heroes. Learning is recognized when performances are appraised, at award ceremonies, and in paychecks and incentive plans that compensate employees for acquiring new knowledge (Marquardt, 2011). Learners, especially learning teams, are promoted and receive bonuses, recognition, and praise. New ideas that lead to better services or products result in “royalties” for their originators. People who collect and transfer knowledge from internal or external sources are commended. Performance appraisals evaluate learning acquired and distributed on an equal basis with other factors. Teamwork is encouraged, and the ability to build and motivate teams and team learning is generously rewarded (Marquardt, 2011). The OGS must make the switch to become a learning organization that fosters rewarding their employees for producing and contributing. An implementation plan for meeting this goal is outlined below.
Implementation Plan for the OGS Rewards System

The OGS needs to consider what type of reward system it will institute. The two main reward system approaches are either hard or soft; however, some organizations can have a combination of the two. Hard rewards are tangible and it has been argued by some that companies should offer outright pay to individuals who share their knowledge. This outright payment might take the form of a raise, stock options, a bonus, or even advancement in the organization (Salisbury, 2009). Abraham Maslow identified two versions of esteem needs, one lower and one higher in the hierarchy. The lower one is the need for the respect of others, for status, fame, glory, recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, and even dominance. The higher form involves the need for self-respect, including such feelings as confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom. In short, people want more than money for doing their job (Salisbury, 2009).

Since the OGS is part of the University of New Mexico and funding is tight, hard rewards in the form of monetary compensation may not be the most feasible for the organization. However, career advancement may be a better option to motivate employees to interact with each other more and increase productivity. The OGS could implement a system to keep track of work contributions made by current employees and their impact on increasing the productivity of the organization as a whole. Over time, whichever employee has made the most contributions and most impact to improving the organization could be promoted into a more managerial/administrative role. This type of hard reward would be completely contingent upon if the OGS was willing and able to create a position within the organization to be filled by a top performing employee (see figure 7).
A more feasible route for the OGS to take would be to implement a completely soft reward system for its employees. Soft rewards would be much easier to implement within the OGS, as they do not require much, if any money to produce. A soft rewards system that tracks employee’s interactivity, productivity, and contributions could be implemented and maintained by a member of the administrative staff. As employees make contributions and become more productive via interacting with other teams, they could be rewarded with certificates of appreciation, trophies, or simple recognition during staff meetings. Recognition could also be given to teams that interact with each other and find solutions to increase productivity within the organization. The simple act of recognizing employees and/or teams within the OGS could make a huge difference on how employees feel about their jobs, roles, and overall satisfaction.

**Tracking the Success of this Intervention**

Tracking the success of implementing a rewards system for the OGS would be quite simple. If OGS employees are beginning to show more interactivity with one another, along with
increasing productivity of the organization, then the intervention has worked (see figure 8).

Keeping track of who is contributing and interacting in pursuit of hard or soft rewards could be easily presented in a spreadsheet and updated as needed. The intervention could also be evaluated at certain intervals to ensure that the rewards being utilized are desirable to employees and if they need to be changed to increase the motivation of employees to want to earn them. A trend would develop that would show what rewards were given for a certain time period and if there was a reduction of interactivity and productivity in response to the rewards given. If the employees start to see no value in the types of rewards given, there must be a re-evaluation of what types of rewards could possibly motivate them more in the future.

Figure 8

Initiative #3: Change the Business Culture of the Office

Background

A needs assessment (in the form of a survey) was conducted to identify the issues and challenges currently faced by employees of the Office of Graduate Studies at the University of New Mexico. After analyzing the data, one of the strongest trends noted by respondents of the
survey was that OGS employees appear to feel a strong sense of isolation from each other within the department. This is primarily due to the fact that the office has been in existence for many years, and a culture has developed that does not appear to welcome and embrace the changes that are necessary to remain an effective and efficient learning organization.

In the survey, employees felt that they did not always have access to “systems for collecting internal and external information,” did not have a solid process for benchmarking best practices, and did not feel empowered or trained in “the skills of creative thinking, innovation, and experimentation.” Additionally, employees did not feel capable of managing their own learning and development, and were not encouraged to “use the action learning process—that is, they learn from careful reflection on the problem or situation and apply their new knowledge to future actions.”

The results of this survey are in direct conflict with Marquardt’s research in building successful learning organizations. According to Marquardt (2011), employees of successful learning organizations should be viewed as competent adults who are capable of handling any situation. Additionally, successful learning organizations do the following: (1) Delegate authority, (2) Involve employees in developing strategies, (3) Provide a self-service system which allows employees access to training and development courses, company policies and communication benefits services, and personal data, and (4) Balance individual and organizational needs. Therefore, the aforementioned needs analysis indicates that a change needs to occur in the office’s business culture to one that promotes the sharing of knowledge and best practices. An implementation plan for meeting this goal is outlined below.
Implementation Plan for Changing the Business Culture of the OGS

In order for true changes to occur in an engrained business culture, management must address the culture from every angle. Changing how employees approach business can involve months, and even years of intense training and commitment to change. The only way a business culture can be effectively changed is if senior management is on board every step of the way. Managers must effectively model and demonstrate the new culture in their own professional interactions.

Marquardt (2011) states that managers in today’s learning organization need take on the new role of empowering rather than controlling their employees. They can achieve this by serving as instructors, coaches, or mentors to their employees. Managers should assist colleagues in the acquisition of knowledge and can serve as a co-learner and model “good learning” practices. The management of OGS should strive to create and design new practices, coordinate the interactions between co-workers, and fundamentally serve as advocates for the acquisition of knowledge within the organization. Managers at the OGS must also learn new leadership skills, such as building shared vision, coordinating multiple teams, acknowledging and testing mental models, engaging in systems thinking, encouraging creativity, and inspiring learning and action (see figure 9).
It is recommended that a training program be developed to address the needs of the current management at OGS to determine which skills managers need to acquire in order to effectively begin to accommodate a change in the business climate and culture. Since the organization is an integral part of a larger university system, it is feasible that university students studying business administration could fundamentally develop and implement a management training program as a part of their curriculum studies. This would enable the OGS to access training at virtually no expendable costs.

**Tracking the Success of this Intervention**

Just as the initial needs survey that was compiled, another survey would be developed to track the success of the management program. Employees will be asked to respond to questionnaire addressing their job satisfaction, and whether or not they felt their previous needs and concerns had been met. The evaluation’s key questions would be re-addressed while analyzing the collected data. Qualitative data gathered from the survey will be used to code and categorize themes and patterns. This information will provide rich insights into the needs, values and beliefs of the participants, which will then be used to understand and analyze how effective the training was at changing the climate and culture of the learning organization.
References


