

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT  
AT THE WARD CHRISTMAS PARTY

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*Editor's Note: Kevin gets no sympathy here; he chose which ward to live in.*

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is hard work.**

Let's not kid ourselves: this business of creating a university is hard work. Three preps, chairing a department, and addressing all the plans mean nonstop reading, discussion, and meetings, interrupted only by alternating appearances in the men's room and the classroom.

Since evenings are filled with church callings, ball games, concerts, and town meetings, the only time my brain gets to think is after my 2:30 a.m. peregrination (age is setting in). Little electrodes in the brain start firing. "This is our big chance—He has absolutely nothing to do right now! Let's start creating thoughts!"

So there I am, for the next three hours until the alarm goes off at 5:30, doing my best thinking (my only thinking). Wide awake, energized. And that's on a good night. My morning prayer mostly consists of asking the Spirit to revive my body so it will run for one more day.

But creating a university is also fun, and sometimes funny. Last Christmas, after we learned that Business Management is among the first programs to go four-year, I found myself courted by all manner of disciplines who suddenly decided maybe business people aren't so despicable after all.

There I am at the ward Christmas party, trying to stay awake, when Carma Sutherland approaches me. "You know, Brother Shiley, an important part of preparation for a business career is to dress for success. Based on how you dress (especially your tie), I think your students need a three-credit course in Business Formal, Business Casual, and Friday Dress-down."

"Boy, you have a point there, Sister Sutherland." I add Clothing-355 to the required list.

Next I am cornered by Kelly Burgener and Matt Geddes. "Business people are clueless when it comes to art. When an art-loving client suggests a visit to the art museum, you embarrass yourselves horribly. You need a course in Art Appreciation for Business Bozos."

"Can't argue with that," I reply. "I can't tell my Monet from my Manet. Or is it Faulkner from Steinbeck?" Art-366 goes on the list.

Next, my Stake President, Roger Hoggan, sidles up. "Kevin, do you realize how important rocks and minerals are to our economy? Precious metals, gems, petroleum—these natural resources all come out of the ground!"

How do you feel about saying “No” to your Stake President? Business Geology and Mineral Management goes on the list.

No sooner does Roger leave than Vaughn Stevenson walks up. “You know, Kevin, I’ve been thinking...”

“Let me guess, Vaughn, ‘Music for Money Mongers.’” Vaughn is my choir director, so his course goes on the list. That will guarantee no solos for the next year.

Steve Allen walks by. “Sorry Steve, Vaughn already beat you to it.”

“Oh, no, I have something different. You know how you business people always get put in tough situations when your clients want you to have a drink in the lounge? In the spirit of ‘out with the bad; in with the good,’ I have a course for you called Fresh Air and Primary Songs. Rather than guiltily standing around the piano bar with a glass of 7-Up, you take your client outside and sing together.”

I stop short of requiring this one, but it makes the enrichment elective list.

As I choke down the last of my lutefisk at the Norwegian Christmas booth, KC Jones runs up. “Kevin, you business types get in all kinds of dangerous situations. You know, like assassination attempts on American expatriates.”

Blue-faced, I gasp, not to mention choking on my hors d’oeuvre. KC expertly performs a Heimlich maneuver. Hey, he saves my life, so what can I do? Paramedics-322, Emergency Medical Training for Executives, is now part of the junior core.

I’m trying to hide in the custodial closet but my neighbor, Stephen George, pries the door open, assisted by William Brugger. “We heard you confuse Faulkner and Steinbeck for artists,” they lisp with Machiavellian smiles. “Clearly, business people need Literature for Lummoxes. We already have a reading list guaranteed to make your students feel guilty about their future careers and become English majors instead.”

Now you’re talking. The fewer the majors, the easier my life will be. English-477 goes on the list.

I’m thinking there are no more Ricks instructors left in the ward when Gary Benson wanders by. “You know, Kevin, business presentations are really theatrical presentations. Especially when you have to lie to keep your stock price up, or to make that last sale of the month.”

“Say no more, Gary—I love the theater.” Theater Arts-444, White Lies, Whoppers, and Spinning-For-Winning is now required of all majors, though something in the back of my mind bothers me about this one.

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Wendy Bone twirls by next. “I have a companion course to Gary’s. When your students find themselves in a press conference after a major product recall, they need to be able to dance around the issues.”

Dance-411 makes the cut—Mambo for Managers goes on the enrichment list.

Wilson Brown boogies up—how have I never before noticed that leaving campus is no different socially from staying on campus? “I heard about Steve’s Fresh Air and Primary Songs. Don’t you think Ellington for Executives has a nice ring?”

I run out the door with Marsha Bjornn sprinting behind shouting, “Organ for Organizers,” Richard Briggs on her heels screaming, “Corporate Ceramics.” Chris Lowry brings up the rear with “Maslovian Management.”

**The only ward faculty member who hasn’t pitched a class to me is Shane Goodwin, but then I remember that we previously agreed to require** My Business Division colleagues Phil Packer and Ray Couch set picks for me in the parking lot and I escape. The only ward faculty member who hasn’t pitched a class to me is Shane Goodwin, but then I remember that we previously agreed to require Math-108.

**Math-108.** For some reason, Max, Jim, and Don are not amused by my proposal for 244 credits, so I meet with the Department to pare the list. They agree with me that it’s important to have well rounded business students, so we toss the irrelevant stuff like Marketing, Finance, Operations, and Organizational Behavior. This is hopeful, so we dig deeper, eliminating Accounting and Economics; business people are already too numbers-oriented. We were challenged by the metaphor of new wine in new bottles, and we are up to the challenge. Max, Jim, and Don love it.

My life is just resuming a semblance of order when I hear, “That’s a look at the local weather. Now it’s back to NPR’s Morning Edition.”

If the ward Christmas party was only a sweet dream, how come my stomach feels like I actually ate that lutefisk? I pull on my pants and cinch my favorite tie around my neck. (Carma Sutherland parks across campus from me, so there’s no danger of her actually seeing me.)

In the office the actual nightmare awaits: the actual colleagues, their actual proposals, the actual rubber meeting the road. Just hold on a second, Max and Jim and Don. ☺