THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
The Bryan School of Business and Economics
Department of Business Administration

MBA 629A-01: Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage
Spring 2010

W 6:30 – 9:20 PM  Bryan

Professor:  Dr. Moses Acquaah
Office:  354 Bryan Building
Telephone:  336-334-5305 (Office); 336-334-5691 (Business Administration Office).
Email Address:  acquaah@uncg.edu
Office Hours:  W 5:00 – 6:00 PM
OR By Appointment

Required Readings & Materials
1. Cases to be discussed in Class

Supplementary Readings
3. Readings from various Practitioner-related Journals that may be helpful in analyzing the
cases (*Most of the readings could be obtained from Blackboard*).
4. Handouts as provided.

Course Description
This is an integrative seminar addressing the requirements and challenges of implementing
corporate, business and functional area strategies.  It is a “capstone” course in that it assumes a
working familiarity with all major functional areas, as well as a foundation in strategic analysis
and strategy formulation.

The goal of this course is to assist students in the integration of learning and experience
regarding what it takes to turn strategic thinking into organizational action.  Given the capstone
nature of the course heavy emphasis is placed on actively engaging the student in the creation,
delivery, and evaluation of strategy implementation content.  Students will therefore examine the
activities of general managers as they attempt to create sustainable competitive advantage for
their companies with emphasis on implementation issues.  Students will also be given the
opportunity to gain experience by working as part of a team of top managers formulating and
implementing strategies for a simulated company, and also leading in the discussion of cases.
Thus, the professor becomes more of a facilitator of the case analysis and less of a lecturer or
a leader in the case discussions.

Students are expected to bring a wealth of existing knowledge regarding the formulation and
analysis of business strategy and to be fully prepared to participate and contribute in class
discussions. Participation becomes even more important than usual in a class such as this one. The student role requires not only a willingness to learn but also a willingness to be responsible for the learning of others. Despite the fact that the course is predominantly case and simulation based, students would be required to provide timely real world information, examples and case updates to illustrate key learning points. It is therefore highly recommended that students subscribe and get into the habit of reading at least one of the following publications on a regular basis: *Business Week, Forbes, Fortune*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

**The Business Strategy Game (BSG):** Simulations are becoming an important component in most strategy capstone courses because they are also being used in companies. The business simulation, called BSG provides you with the opportunity to gain a hands-on experience in managing a global company as a member of a top management team. Each team will formulate and implement strategies that integrate the major functional areas of a company (Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Marketing, and Operations & Supply Chain Management). You will have to make strategic decisions under conditions of uncertainty and the effect of those decisions on performance within a competitive market environment.

**Course Objectives**
1. Describe and apply the tools of strategic and competitive analysis (e.g., five forces analysis, SWOT analysis, segmentation analysis, portfolio matrix models, and performance evaluation models).
2. Understand how to integrate strategic analysis, strategy formulation and strategy implementation in an organization.
3. Discriminate relevant from irrelevant information in company and industry case studies, and assess the activities of top managers that allow them to create sustainable competitive advantage for their companies.
4. Acquire the experience of managing a company in the real world by performing strategic and competitive analysis, formulating and implementing various strategies for a company in a simulated global business environment to gain competitive advantage.
5. Discuss the managerial task associated with implementing and executing company strategies and the actions managers can take to promote competent strategy implementation.
6. Synthesize the knowledge gained in a variety different business and related courses, the case discussions and the simulation exercises to craft and implement future business strategies.

**Grading**

**BSG Simulation Exercises**
- BSG Simulation quizzes (2 @ 5% each) 10%
- Initial statement of company mission, objectives and strategy 5%
- Simulation performance 15%
- Written Report 10%
- Total Simulation 40%

**Class Contribution (Verbal)** 15%
**Group Case Leadership** 15%
**Individual Written Case Analysis** 10%
**Final Exam (Comprehensive Case Analysis)** 20%

**Total** 100%
Grades will be assigned on an absolute scale for any given element of the course. However, the grade distribution will be assigned in percentage terms as follows: A: 94 -100%; A-: 90 – 93%; B+: 86 – 89%; B: 82 – 85; B-: 79 – 81.

Team Formation

Many students lament the trend toward the “teaming” of organizations and student learning experiences. Yet US employers continue to identify the ability to work in teams as a key attribute of employability. In this class you will join a team and work with that team on short-term projects. We will form teams on the first night. You may select your own team members, but the maximum number of members in each team should not exceed 3.

Given the structure of the course, we need for the class to divide into SEVEN teams. Based on the enrollment in this class team sizes would most likely be three or four students (3 teams with 3 students and 4 teams with 4 students each). Students may pick their own team members on condition that each team must contain at least one person born in the United States and one person not born in the United States (if possible). Time will be allotted on the first evening of class to establish teams and meet with team members. You will have the responsibility for leading the class approximately 60 minutes about every four to five weeks, and act as the top management team (TMT) of a company for the BSG simulation. The number of your team will determine whether your team has partial responsibility for leading the class from the third to the fourteenth week of the class. So you will want to establish some effective methods of communicating ideas and information.

Logistics

Each night we will discuss three to four readings and discuss a case (This applies to weeks 2 through 14). Two teams will be in charge of leading, presenting, and discussing the readings and cases each week, except the second week. The instructors will lead the discussion of the second week’s readings and case. The teams are required to submit to the instructor a copy of their case presentation outline by electronic mail at least two hours before the beginning of class.

Weekly Class Schedule

2. First Team – Analysis of case by team and class discussions of case.
3. Break
4. Second Team – Analysis of case by team and class discussions of case.
5. Class Activity – BSG simulation questions and discussions.
6. Acquaah – Brief summary of night’s class and closing remarks.

Description of Major Class Components

BSG Simulation Exercises (40%)

Your team will manage a company, which would be required to make a set of decisions relating to the functional areas. To learn the simulation, you will need to read the Player's Manual.
thoroughly. To register for the BSG simulation, I will provide each student with his/her industry/company registration code at the first day of class after the formation of groups. You will then have to go to www.bsg-online.com to register for the simulation exercise. You will need to complete the registration process by paying with a credit card.

There will also be a practice round to help you familiarize yourself with the dynamics of the game. You will be evaluated on the following activities:

1. **BSG Simulation quizzes (2 quizzes, open-book, to be completed online by the due dates).**
2. **Initial statement of company mission, objectives and strategy (Due February 25, 2009):** Present your company’s mission, objectives and intended strategy. The strategy statements should not be more than **FIVE** pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, page-numbered and should have a cover page. Your statement should include but not limited to addressing the following questions:
   - What is the purpose of your company?
   - What are your company’s performance targets or objectives and under what timetable?
   - What positions you seek in the industry or marketplace.
   - What differentiates your company from your competitors? How it would enable your company to achieve superior performance?
   - What is your plan for getting there? What trade-offs do you anticipate making?
   - How are you organizing your top management team? What roles is each person performing? How will you make team decisions?
3. **Overall performance:** You will be awarded points based on how well your company met its different performance objectives in comparison with other companies in the same industry. Your company’s performance will be based on five performance measures, with weights in parentheses: (a) earnings per share (20%); (b) return on stockholders’ equity (ROE) (20%); (c) stock price appreciation (20%); (d) the company’s credit rating (20%); and (e) corporate/brand image (20%).
4. **Final Written Report (Due April 29, 2009):** Each team will provide a written report to its Board of Directors and investors/analysts about the company’s efficiency and effectiveness in accomplishing its initial mission and objectives, and future prospects. The report should include the following in an integrated manner:
   - Brief review of performance.
   - Comparison of actual strategies with intended strategy.
   - Critical evaluation of actual and intended strategies and decisions within the context of the industry environment and the company’s competitive resources and capabilities.
   - Examination of top management team decision-making processes. What planning and decision process you used.
   - Presentation of the general strategy you would use if the game was to continue for five more years into the future.
   - Discussion of what you learned from the experience.

Present an honest and critical assessment of your team’s successes and failures in the light of the dynamic business and economic environment, highlighting the important critical issues your team encountered.
The report should not be more than **15 pages** (excluding any figures or tables, which must be placed in the appendix). The report must be double-spaced, font size 11 and above with 1 inch margins. **You will lose points equal to 5% of the BSG grade for each violation.**

**Class contribution (15%)**

Class contribution has many facets in the course including:
- Attendance
- Courtesy (cell phones/pagers off; absence of extensive side conversations)
- Attentiveness (focus directed to whoever has the floor, not distracting others)
- Asking questions of groups presenting the readings and cases
- Providing comments and critiquing reading materials
- Providing constructive comments and suggestions on cases
- Use of Laptop computers in class solely for the purpose of class activities that day. **Note that if you're found using your computer for any other purpose, you'll not be allowed to bring your computer to class for the rest of the semester.**

Note that if you attend all classes and do not provide comments, suggestions, or ask questions about the presentation, you'll only receive a **maximum of 40%** of the class participation grade. Class contribution will be awarded during every class session.

**Case presentations and discussions (15%)**

The team identified in the course schedule will have 30-45 minutes to deliver a traditional case analysis concluding with recommendations for the organization. Assume your audience have read the case but have agonized less over its contents than your team. *Convey* the big ideas by focusing on the most important issues in the case. You may bring in materials from other courses and from your own perusal of the supplementary readings and searches if they relate to the issues in the case.

Your team should allow time for questions and answers, and comments from the audience regarding the issues, ideas and recommendations you *conveyed*. In other words, do not plan on presenting for more than 30 uninterrupted minutes (leave at least 20 minutes for questions and discussions).

**Grading of case analysis** will be based partly on *presentation and delivery* (professionalism, clarity of speech, visual aids, coverage of major issues in case – 40%), and *content of presentation* (quality of analysis and recommendations – 60%).

**Individual written case analysis (10%)**

Every student will be required to prepare **ONE** written case analysis from the cases to be discussed in class. An individual whose team is presenting a particular case cannot write on that case. For example, Team 1 is scheduled to present the “Dell Computer” case; if you’re a member of Team 1 you cannot submit an individual written analysis on that case. You should conduct a traditional individual written case analysis using the tools and techniques gained from this course and the balance of your MBA courses to provide a true capstone analysis. The written case must be professionally prepared and turned in latest at the end of the class period in which that particular case is being discussed. **The case analysis should be 5-7 pages in length (excluding any figures or tables), page numbered, double-spaced, font size 11 and**
above, and 1-inch margins. The case analysis report should have a cover page. You will lose points equal to 5% of the written case grade for each violation. To spread the workload in grading the cases over the course of the semester, I will present a sign-up sheet for the case write-up on the first day of class. You will be graded on the thoroughness of your analysis, reasoning ability and writing.

**Final Exams (20%)**

You will be provided with a case to analyze for your final exam. The case will either be posted on blackboard or provided to you in class on **April 22, 2009** and you will be required to turn it in on **April 29, 2009**. You will be graded on the thoroughness of your analysis, the application of concepts exposed to during the balance of your MBA courses, your reasoning ability and writing.

**University Operations during Adverse Weather Conditions**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro will remain open during adverse weather conditions unless the Chancellor makes administrative decision on schedule changes. Students can obtain details on those decisions by contacting the Adverse Weather Line at (336) 334-5000 or the following web address: [http://www.uncg.edu/iss/weather.htm](http://www.uncg.edu/iss/weather.htm)

**Academic Honor Policy**

The Academic Honor Policy, administered by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, is described in detail in the Policies for Students handbook (Please refer to [http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu](http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu)). Students are responsible for becoming familiar with the Honor Policy in all its aspects and for indicating their knowledge and acceptance of the Honor Policy by signing the honor pledge for all major work submitted. Students should recognize their responsibility to uphold the Honor Policy and to report apparent violations to the appropriate persons.

**Student Conduct**

The Bryan School has guidelines on student conduct which can be found at [http://www.uncg.edu/bae/faculty_student_guidelines.pdf](http://www.uncg.edu/bae/faculty_student_guidelines.pdf).
### MBA 629A-02: Schedule of Class Activities and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>• Welcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Class orientation and introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formation of teams for case presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assignment of case presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formation of teams for BSG simulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td><strong>Strategy Process: The Job of Managers or Leaders</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Case Discussions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Case Discussion # 1: The Global Leadership of Carlos Ghosn at Nissan (Acquaah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Supplementary Readings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ASSIGNMENT:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Print and Read Player's Manual for BSG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 3</td>
<td><strong>Strategy Content: What is Strategy?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Case Discussions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Case Discussion #1: Dell Computer in 2008 (Team 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Case Discussion #2: Apple Inc., in 2008 (Team 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Supplementary Readings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Other Assignments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• BSG Simulation Practice Decision Due by 8:00 pm on February 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Complete BSG simulation online quiz 1 before 8:00 pm on February 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| February 10 | **The Content of Strategy Implementation**  
**Case Discussions:**  
- Case Discussion #1: Black Diamond (Team 3)  
- Case Discussion #2: Shangri-La Hotels (Team 4)  
**Supplementary Readings:**  
**Other Assignments:**  
- BSG Simulation Decision 1 (Year 11) Due by 8:00 pm on February 10 |
| February 17 | **Leadership Issues in Implementing Strategy**  
**Case Discussions:**  
- Case Discussion #1: JetBlue Airways (Team 5)  
- Case Discussion #2: Procter and Gamble (Team 6)  
**Supplementary Readings:**  
**Other Assignments:**  
- BSG Simulation Decision 2 (Year 12) Due by 8:00 pm on February 17 |
| February 24 | **Implementing Human Resource Strategies**  
**Case Discussions:**  
- Case Discussion #1: Research in Motion. (Team 7).  
- Case Discussion #2: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel (Team 1)  
**Supplementary Readings:**  
**Other Assignments:**  
- BSG Simulation Decision 3 (Year 13) Due by 8:00 pm on February 24  
- Statement of Mission, Objectives and Strategy Due in class |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 3</th>
<th>Implementing Sourcing/Outsourcing Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Case Discussions:** | • Case Discussion #1: Cathay Pacific (Team 2)  
• Case Discussion #2: Global Information Systems (Team 3) |
| **Other Assignments:** | • BSG Simulation Decision 4 (Year 14) Due by 8:00 pm on March 3 |

| March 10 | **SPRING BREAK** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 17</th>
<th>Implementing Innovation and Technology Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Case Discussions:** | • Case Discussion #1: Cisco Systems Inc: Implementing ERP. (Team 4)  
• Case Discussion #2: Innovation at 3M Corporation. (Team 5) |
| **Other Assignments:** | • BSG Simulation Decision 5 (Year 15) Due by 8:00 pm on March 17 |
### March 24

**Implementing Global/International strategies**

**Case Discussions:**
- Case Discussion #1: Lincoln Electric: Venturing Abroad. (Team 6)
- Case Discussion #2: Sun Life Financial: Entering China (Team 7).

**Supplementary Readings:**

**Other Assignments:**
- BSG Simulation Decision 6 (Year 16) Due by 8:00 pm on March 24
- Complete BSG simulation online quiz 2 before 8:00 pm on March 24

### March 31

**Implementing Corporate Strategies – Strategic Alliances**

**Case Discussions:**
- Case Discussion #1: Xerox and Fuji Xerox. (Team 1)
- Case Discussion #2: The Renault-Nissan Alliance (Team 2)

**Supplementary Readings:**

**Other Assignments:**
- BSG Simulation Decision 7 (Year 17) Due by 8:00 pm on March 31

### April 7

**Implementing Marketing Strategies**

**Case Discussions:**
- Case Discussion #1: Snapple. (Team 3)
- Case Discussion #2: Real Madrid (Team 4)

**Supplementary Readings:**

**Other Assignments:**
- BSG Simulation Decision 8 (Year 18) Due by 8:00 pm on April 7
| April 14 | **Rewards and Compensation**  
**Case Discussions:**  
- Case Discussion #1: Kidder Peabody and Co: Creating Elusive Profits. (Team 5)  
- Case Discussion #2: Mary Kay Cosmetics. (Team 6)  
**Supplementary Readings**  
**Other Assignments:**  
- BSG Simulation Decision 9 (Year 19) Due by 8:00 pm on April 14 |
| April 21 | **Implementing Strategy Through the Balanced Scorecard and Strategic Control**  
**Case Discussions:**  
- Case Discussion #22: Citibank: Performance Evaluation. (Team 7)  
**Supplementary Readings:**  
**Other Assignments:**  
- BSG Simulation Decision 10 (Year 20) Due by 8:00 pm on April 21 |
| April 28 |  
- Final Written Reports on BSG Simulation Due  
- Final Case Exam Due  

**Note:** This is a tentative class schedule and may be changed either at the beginning of the semester or in the course of the semester.