



# **Goldey-Beacom College DBA Program Attacks the Pandemic with Both a Sense of Urgency and Optimism**

BY W. DANIEL YOUNG, PHD, MBA

AS THE STATE OF DELAWARE braced itself for the various and ubiquitous effects – medical, personal, emotional, and financial – of COVID-19, we in the academic community began thinking towards the future of education. For us, the onset of COVID-19 created a seismic shift in the way we interacted with students and each other. Many schools have developed online capabilities and training for their faculty and staff. However, Goldey-Beacom College (GBC) had built its 134-year brand on excellence in face-to-face engagement with students. Luckily, the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) Program of Goldey-Beacom College, which began in 2018 on the platform of hybrid learning with both face-

to-face and online components, was designed to thrive and innovate in this very environment. Below are some of the best practices that were revolutionized in the DBA Program that have provided incredible value.

The first checkpoint in our Post-COVID-19 course creation process was to account for an accounting of which skill sets were learned most effectively in the face-to-face environment and which were learned most effectively online. All our DBA practitioners are skilled in the art of the Socratic Method of teaching. According to the Foundation for Critical Thinking, the Socratic Method is the most powerful teaching tactic for building critical thinking skills in students. The foundation of this method

is giving students questions – not answers – in the form of a cooperative dialogue based on this interplay of asking and answering to draw out both existing biases and new ideas.

The DBA found that face-to-face courses specifically using this method were preferred – compared with online learning – to share ideas in the classroom by comparing and contrasting opposing views. Many of these actions could be partially replicated in the Zoom environment with a few “agreements” between Zoom participants. One agreement was to have a “picture” up for each Zoom call. If a person does not feel comfortable with how they look that day, they can upload a profile picture to their Zoom account. If they do not like their surroundings, they can pull up one of Zoom’s virtual backgrounds. But we do like to see all faces in the screen because it builds some level of trust, even on the surface level.

The Goldey-Beacom College DBA Program was created to use practical business problem-solving as the “teacher” in the classroom. The use of video conferencing has allowed us to pull in teachers from all over the world. We can now have an adjunct instructor who is based in Mexico City teach a class for a semester. It has also allowed us to expand the footprint of our college from the 24 acres in Pike Creek, Delaware, to the entirety of the business world. Imagine a classroom where you were working to work on the problems of Theater N in Wilmington, Entrepreneurial Spark! in Glasgow, Scotland, and Barcelona Study Abroad Experience in Spain. The use of video conferencing technology has allowed

us to accomplish these tasks.

The renowned rapper The Notorious B.I.G. once said, “Stay far from timid, only make moves when your heart’s in it, and live the phrase Sky’s The Limit”. GBC has truly embraced this attitude by not only preparing its doctoral students to embrace these methodologies but also preparing all of its faculty and staff of all levels to adopt “hyflex” models. A hyflex, or hybrid-flexible, course allows each individual student to choose whether they want to attend class online or in person. Students can choose their preferred method of learning on a daily basis; they may attend some sessions online and other sessions in the classroom, depending on their level of comfort with the COVID-19 epidemic, their general health, or other extenuating circumstances. While the college is weighing this option for the fall, we are taking the proactive steps to prepare our faculty for that contingency. Goldey-Beacom College is attacking the COVID-19 outbreak with a sense of urgency, but also optimism. These changes will continue to keep GBC at the forefront of individualized, business education in the state of Delaware. ■



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