

Re: A faculty development idea for the future

February 28, 2013

To Arturo Condo and your Academic Team

From: Harry Strachan

Congratulations on the strategy process you have going at INCAE and for inviting me to participate in the meeting this morning at the CRCC. I am positively impressed with the Executive Education strategy and virtually all the things you are trying to do. Adding Camelia to your senior team of Enrique and John is going to go a long way to addressing some of the problems you and I have talked about in the past.

My objective in this email is to put into writing one of the suggestions I made in the meeting, hopefully in a more complete and understandable form, so that you can better share them with your team and the Consejo Directivo.

A Faculty Development Idea for the Future

As your demographic slides point out, in the future people are not only going to have longer careers, but probably have several alternative careers. Their needs for continuing education will present INCAE with both a challenge and opportunity.

What's true for our MBAs is also true for our Faculty and creates an opportunity to rethink sourcing of top notch faculty. I'd like to urge us to create an alternative career path by which our very best students could in a second career become part of teaching faculty without having gotten doctorate but having acquired the skills they will need to be as good or better in the classroom and in research as those who have come through our traditional faculty development program – a case writing research position at INCAE, followed by a doctorate at a top program, followed by a return to a faculty position.

The model I have in mind is one I saw at the Harvard Law School. Virtually all the faculty members teaching, writing the case books and articles when I was there, did not have any degrees beyond that of the J.D. Very few of them had gone from school directly into teaching or legal research. Most of them had been in the top 2.5% of their classes, been on the Law Review, done important research as students. Their first jobs were often as clerks to judges in the top courts of the land, positions

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they often got through a mentor who was already thinking of preparing them for a return to academia. The two or three year clerkship was generally followed by a five to ten year stint in major law firms often practicing in the specialization they would later teach and write about. My impression is that during this period the school's dean and senior professors stayed in touch, encouraged their writing and research. At the right time they were offered a position on the faculty full time.

My suggestion is that we think of an analogous model for the very smartest MBAs. I've counseled perhaps a dozen of the top students at INCAE over the last 20 years and hired a good number of them. Most of them are intellectually curious, have continued to read widely and deeply. From the beginning many of them found the idea of teaching attractive. Some chose the traditional academic route (like Arturo Condo). However, many more decided on post MBA careers in consulting or investment banking or private equity. (And as many doctorates have gotten less oriented to actual business issues, longer and more expensive, and as it is increasingly obvious that many of the best ideas and books are being developed and written by practitioners in these higher paying consulting and investing firms, it is hard to argue they are making the wrong choice.)

Recognizing that the top talent may not have a doctorate and that great success and expertise from practitioners can be a huge asset in the teaching faculty, virtually all the top business schools are experimenting with adjunct or alternative positions on their faculty. The yield from these experiments though, I believe, has been low, the results mixed. What makes for a successful CEO, consultants, or investor is not necessarily what is required for a good case method teacher or productive researcher. They may have the raw material to be excellent, but they need to have developed the skills required for the professor role.

Is there a relatively inexpensive, long term program by which INCAE could both develop potential faculty without a doctorate and at the same time derive immediate benefits? I think so. Let me throw out some ideas of how it might look.

1. INCAE identifies its most brilliant graduates, those with both the intellect and interest that would permit them to become star faculty. If they can attract them to the research faculty and into a doctorate, they do. But if not, they help them get jobs in the best firms where they can develop their expertise (whether in marketing, finance, operations, or human resources) and continue to stay in touch.
2. They encourage these star students, while in their jobs, to become "adjunct", as it were, to the core faculty group in their area of interest. They involve

them on a pro bono basis in the research and case writing of that area. They invite them into the classroom to share with students their real life experiences. The core faculty uses them to identify good cases to write and topics that need to be researched. (John Stanham is a good example of someone who graduated #1 from INCAE, is a voracious reader/student of business literature, has been a very successful consultant and has responded to every invitation INCAE has given him to get involved in the classroom – all pro bono.)

3. It might even be possible to arrange for these practitioners to take their sabbatical and spend a year teaching courses at INCAE or involved in an “impact program.”
4. Finally at the right time (perhaps 10, 20, or 30 years later), if this practitioner has demonstrated that he has the intellectual capital in the area as well as practical experience, if she has demonstrated the communication and research skill, they can be invited on to the faculty as full members, not as second class citizens or instructors.

If the only benefit from this program was faculty for many years down the road, it probably would not be high priority. However, I suggest it in all seriousness, because I think it will not only keep your most talented graduates close to the school but it will help connect your academic faculty to the real world, keep them current, keep them practical. If I’m correct the core faculty in helping develop the practitioner is also helping in his or her own development.

Let me also add that if the idea has merit for newly graduated MBAs, I think it can easily be extended immediately to graduates in the region (of either INCAE or other top MBA programs) who have been out 15 years and are showing all the earmarks of potential star faculty. Get them involved as advisors to core areas, bring them into the classroom as visitors, involve them in research projects, start talking to them about things they can do to acquire case method teaching skills. Plant seeds for bring them back to INCAE for a second or third career.