

A Report on the Development of an Articulation  
Agreement on the Transfer of Students from the  
Wuhan University of Science and Technology to  
the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)  
Degree Program at Washburn University

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# A REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTICULATION AGREEMENT ON THE TRANSFER OF STUDENTS FROM THE WUHAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (BBA) DEGREE PROGRAM AT WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the development and implementation of an articulation agreement as an alternative mechanism to the dual degree or double degree to develop and implement a program to transfer degree-seeking students from the Wuhan University of Science and Technology (WUST) to the bachelor of business administration (BBA) degree program at Washburn University (WU).

## KEYWORDS

Articulation agreement, joint degree, dual degree

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reports of the development of an undergraduate degree partnership between the School of Business at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, USA, and the School of Management at the Wuhan University of Science and Technology (WUST), in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. The basic idea is that the students will study English, required university courses, and business at WUST for two years and then transfer to WU for two to three more years of study of English, required university and general education courses and business course to complete the requirements of the Washburn degree. Arrangements were to be made for coursework that would allow the completion of the WUST degree as well, either by transferring coursework back to China, or by returning to China. Initially it was hoped that the whole package could be done in four years or in four years and a little more, making the program a "2+2." However, close analysis revealed that this could not be done because of the amount of required English study within the four years, additional needed general education coursework beyond that taken at WUST, residency requirements in the School of Business, and AACSB requirements on transfer credit, joint degrees, and partnerships with non-accredited business schools. At present, we are operating with the idea that students will study two years at WUST, one semester mostly of English at Washburn, and two to two-and-a-half years of regular coursework at Washburn. An ambitious student might be able to reduce the two-and-a-half years to two years by taking additional courses each semester or by confining him/her self to one major area of concentration. Students who do not test out of intensive English on arrival will take longer to finish. So far, no one has opted to return to China for the fourth year of study.

Although the degree-program articulation agreement was signed in July 2011, the first contact between the two universities occurred some eight years earlier when the two universities became partners within the framework of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and Chinese Educational Association for International Exchange (CEAIE)'s Sino-American Leadership and Training (SALT) program. In spring 2003, the vice president of WUST visited Washburn for about ten days under the SALT program. The second contact was a brief visit to WUST in early June 2005 by a small Washburn

delegation led by the director of International Programs and including the dean of the School of Nursing, and the associate dean of the School of Business (Russell Smith). The June 2005 visit resulted in the signing of an umbrella cooperation agreement between the two universities in fall 2005. The timeline of Section 3.1 begins at this point in time.

## **2. BACKGROUND ON THE PARTNER UNIVERSITIES**

### **2.1 Washburn University (WU)**

Washburn University was founded in 1865 and is now an independent public university receiving tax support from Topeka and Shawnee County. Located on a 160-acre campus in the center of Topeka, the capital of Kansas, Washburn University offers more than 200 programs leading to certification, associate, bachelor, master's and juris doctor degrees through the College of Arts and Sciences and the schools of Applied Studies, Business, Law and Nursing. Washburn's broadly-based liberal arts and professional education programs are enhanced by the tradition of an interactive relationship between campus and community. Washburn has approximately 7,400 students, including about a 1,000 graduate students. The School of Business has about 740 students, including 100 MBA students. Washburn prides itself on small classes and opportunities for interaction between faculty and students, as well as on the level of service it provides to its students.

### **2.2 Wuhan University of Science and Technology (WUST)**

Wuhan University of Science & Technology WUST, a key university with central and provincial administrative condominium, lies in Wuhan City, known as the national thoroughfare in China. Closely tied to the development of the steel industry in Wuhan, the university's origins can be traced to Craftwork School founded in 1898 near the end of Qing Dynasty by Zhang Zhidong, Governor General of Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces.

WUST has 15 colleges offering undergraduate education, including 49 specialties. According to a 2006 announcement by the Center of Academic Degree and Graduate Education of the Chinese Department of Education, two Level I disciplines are in the National Top 10. Nine Level II disciplines, including Business Administration and Public Administration are in the National Top 50. WUST is an authorized unit of doctoral degree research, with two postdoctoral research stations and six doctoral degree programs. WUST has 52 master's degree programs and eleven engineering master's degree programs. WUST has a national key (under cultivation) discipline and 27 provincial key disciplines.

### **2.3 Broad context of the articulation agreement**

WUST and WU have a wider agreement in place to development coordinated and cooperative programs. The universities have an agreement, signed in October 2005, to development academic programs of mutual interest. In addition to the partnership between WUST's School of Management (SOM) and WU's School of Business (SOBU), program developments are in progress in nursing, communication studies, education, and English. The agreement offers advantages for each university. For WUST, it provides access for its students, to a high-quality, U.S.-style post-secondary business education as signaled by accreditation by AACSB International, either as exchange students or degree-seeking students. In addition to an environment where the students will be welcomed and receive support services, there is the advantage of tuition rates well below the regular out-state tuition rate. The advantage for WU will be increased enrollment, the opportunity for global awareness for WU SOBU students, and faculty and organizational development. For both schools, the program is a major strategic initiative that positions the school in each home market.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT

#### 3.1 Timeline

**October 25, 2005:** An agreement of cooperation between WUST and WU was signed by Presidents of each university.

**Spring 2006:** The first visiting scholar from WUST, a professor of information technology in the School of Management, visited Washburn for three months and was able to observe the activities and operations of the School of Business.

**October 2006:** In October the School of Business sponsored a "trade mission" to China which included two faculty members SOBU faculty and members of the Topeka business community. The trip included a three-day visit to WUST and its School of Management. Conversations at the faculty level set the foundation for establishing cooperative courses and programs between the two schools. One professor (Boncella) was invited to return as a guest professor in May 2007. The other professor (Stoica) was involved in a discussion of a joint class on international entrepreneurship which led to the creation of the Washburn course *BU 406 International Business and Entrepreneurial Experience*. Currently, Washburn students work in teams with students from WUST to solve a problem for an overseas company. This course requires travel to China to work face-to-face with students from WUST. The students also work with Chinese companies during that time.

**November 2006** The WUST School of Management extended an invitation to begin developing a 2+2 dual degree program. On the trade mission's return, the associate dean of the Washburn School of Business (Russell Smith) agreed that such a program was feasible based on ordinary policies for transfer credit and also under current (at the time) AACSB advisory documents that expressly permitted dual-degree programs informed by the "50-percent rule" that requires that at least half of the accounting, business, and economics courses used to meet the degree requirements be taken at the accredited school. This becomes significant because in early 2010 AACSB eliminated the explicit permission for dual-degree programs and made the accredited school responsible for assurance of learning (outcome assessment) for the entire program, while reiterating the requirement that transfer courses be comparable to those taken at the degree-granting institution.

**May 2007:** Faculty, students, and leadership from Washburn visited WUST for ten days worked in all three areas. Professor Boncella gave a series of lectures, Professor Stoica brought the BU 406 class to WUST, and Associate Dean Smith accompanied the student group and worked with Associate Dean Zuo on the first technical analysis of the existing WU and WUST bachelor degree programs.

**Fall 2007:** To more efficiently implement the various activities with WUST, and to discuss other program possibilities in Asia, interested SOBU faculty formed an ad hoc committee called the Pacific Rim Group. Meeting several times a month, the group provided a venue to coordinate activities and provided the forum for the discussion of the 2+2 (now X+Y) initiative.

**December 2007:** An agreement of cooperation between WU SOBU and WUST SOM was signed on December 14, 2007 during the visit of a high-level WUST was This agreement specified five areas for cooperation, including "Coordination of a Dual Degree Program for Undergraduates."

**May 2008:** Professor Boncella returned to WUST to give lectures and Professor Stoica returned with the second group of BU 406 students. The dean of the Washburn School of Business visited WUST to participate in the public presentation of the student project reports. Professors Boncella and Stoica interviewed WUST students who would come to Washburn in the fall in the first cohort of exchange students. This process would be repeated for May 2009, May 2010, and May 2011. Currently there are three students from the fall 2010 cohort who are degree-seeking at the Washburn School of Business; there are six exchange students in the fall 2011 cohort who may opt to become degree-seeking for the following year.

**Fall 2008:** The second visiting scholar from WUST (from the management area and coordinator of the WUST side of BU 406) visited Washburn for two months to pursue who professional development program, observe our operations, and to interact with the first cohort of exchange students from WUST.

**May 2009:** Professors Boncella and Stoica and the BU 406 class visit WUST as in previous years.

**Fall 2009:** There is no visiting professor from WUST, but the exchange students arrive.

**November 2009:** A WUST presidential delegation visits Washburn and requests that we develop an X+Y curriculum proposal based on three years at WUST and minimum time at Washburn. The Pacific Rim Group works on a proposal through the winter and spring. Professor Boncella coordinates the discussion and the preparation of the draft working documents.

**April 2010:** On April 29, 2010, sample articulated curricula and a detailed cover level explaining the proposals were communicated to the president of WUST and the dean of the School of Management. The basic document agreement projected a "3+ 1+ 1" program – 3 years of study at WUST + 1 year of study at WU + additional study of on average 1 year of study at Washburn. It included, however, an alternative "2+WU+WUST+WU" where study at Washburn would start in the third year of the program and be followed by the fourth year back at WUST and then the second Washburn year in the fifth year of the program.

**May 2010:** Regular activities at WUST by Professors Boncella and Stoica and BU 406.

**Summer 2010:** The president of Washburn University and the director of International Programs visited WUST for the second time in June 2010. WUST indicate that it accepts the draft proposal. Work remaining to be done included an implementation plan and a financial plan.

**Fall 2010:** Next cohort of exchange students arrived at Washburn. The third visiting scholar, from the WUST marketing area, arrives for a two-month stay and brings with her English syllabi of the WUST business curriculum suitable for transfer credit analysis. She was charged with finding a way to increase the number of WUST courses that can transfer to meet specific Washburn requirements. A strategy is developed for petitioning for the acceptance of WUST courses for Washburn general education distribution requirements.

**February 2011:** The fourth visiting scholar from WUST, this time a management instructor from the International School, arrives for a three-month stay.

**March-April 2011:** The associate dean of the Washburn School of Business visited WUST School of Management for a week and a half for an itinerary that included presentations with student and faculty and meetings with faculty and administration, which led to the completion and initialing on April 6, 2011 of the final draft of the articulation agreement by the dean of the WUST School of Management and the associate dean of Washburn School of Business.

**May 2011:** Professors Boncella and Stoica and the BU 406 class visit Wuhan.

**July 2011:** The articulation agreement on the transfer of students from the Wuhan University of Science and Technology to the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree program at Washburn University is signed by the two presidents and other officials at both universities. The articulation agreement itself is largely a process and implementation document that incorporates by reference, as its curriculum base, the alternative model program from April 2010, the "2+WU+WUST+WU," that included the first two years at WUST and the third year at Washburn, rather than the "3 + 1 + 1." The first three students are approved by WUST for degree-seeking status at Washburn beginning in fall 2011.

**August--September 2011:** The next cohort of exchange students arrived from WUST. The fifth WUST visiting scholar, from the business administration faculty, arrived for a three-month stay.

### 3.2 Timeline summary

The articulation agreement took five years, from fall 2006 to summer 2011, to complete. Initially it was believed it could be done very quickly, in perhaps 18 months. However a number of problems were encountered which allowed the partners to work together and to build a real relationship behind a credit hours business transaction. Over the five years one notes a consistent partner of faculty partnership and the flow of students in both directions within the first year. While there was presidential involvement that gave general direction and permission all the way through and regular dean-level participation, the consistent driver was the faculty at both institutions. It also helped that the students were excited about the opportunities that the partnership created for them. We believe that in the end, the extended timeline was an advantage. Over the years we had the opportunity to learn and grow together and to lay the foundation to develop a quality cooperative business education program between the WUST SOM and the WU SOBU which will benefit all stakeholders.

## 4. CONCLUSION: PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS & LESSONS LEARNED

A number of problems were encountered and overcome during the five years of development of this agreement. The major ones are discussed below.

### 4.1 Language skills

With the arrival of the first exchange students from WUST it was discovered, on the basis of an on campus TOEFL Exam, their English language skills would not allow them to begin immediately to study in the WU SOBU.

As a result, most exchange students were required to take two or three Intensive English courses in their first semester. As result of this, these students would fall behind in the ideal 2+2 curriculum model (2 years at WUST and 2 years at WU) sequence. The solution was to consider a more flexible 2+2+X model.

### 4.2 AACSB accreditation

The Washburn University School of Business is accredited by AACSB International. We are bound to maintain the standards for AACSB International accreditation.

Approximately two years ago in the middle of the process of setting up a joint/dual degree program with the WUST SOM, the AACSB eliminated the concept of "dual degree" from their literature, making a dual-degree partnership come under the same assurance of learning standards as a joint degree.

In the case of a joint degree program with a non-accredited partner, there needs to be a continuous improvement program for the entire program. This includes the non-accredited partner as well. Since WUST is not AACSB accredited, WUST's School of Management would need to follow the assurance of learning standards and processes in place for WU's SOBU. Clearly, requesting the WUST's SOM implement WU's SOBU assurance of learning standards and processes would be an extra ordinary hardship on WUST's SOM.

The solution to this problem was to use AACSB standards about transfer credit, which reads: "These policies should ensure that the academic work accepted from other institutions is comparable to the school's own degree programs."

To implement this solution, it was required that the entire upper-division business core courses be taken in the WU SOBU, while allowing many, but not all of the lower-division core courses could be transferred in, as might occur under an in-state articulation agreement with community colleges. See Section 3.2 below for details. Note: courses numbered 300 or higher are considered upper level.

Finally, the shift of language to "articulation agreement" or "transfer agreement" from "dual-degree" or "joint degree" was the suggestion of our Higher Learning Commission (HLC) liaison. The HLC is an accrediting body that accredits universities and college in the US. In order to be HLC accredited, WU follows its recommendations. Our model of 60-75 hours taken at Washburn was acceptable to the HLC for any student to graduate with a degree that would be considered granted by Washburn University.

### 4.3 WUST and general education requirement of Washburn University.

Another major issue was the general education requirement of Washburn University. In order to receive any degree from Washburn University a specified of number credits in specific academic disciplines must be earned in order to satisfy general education requirement. This is not the case for WUST. All US universities have a similar requirement and most Chinese universities do not have this type of requirement. This may be considered an academic cultural difference.

The solution was to examine non-major courses taken by WUST students to determine if they met or were equivalent to Washburn general education courses. Item 3 of the **WUST-WU BBA Articulation Agreement** addresses this issue.

A future solution is the development of WUST courses to "fit into" WU general education requirement and the WU SOBU core curriculum. These items are addressed in Items 10 and 11 of the **WUST-WU BBA Articulation Agreement** addresses this issues

The articulation agreement can be found at: <http://www.washburn.edu/faculty/boncella/wu-wust-docs>. In addition, posted on this site is an example of an articulated curriculum between the International Business major WUST and the BBA degree of WU

#### 4.4 Transfer of credit

Another issue was the process used to determine the transfer of credit from WUST to WU. Items 2, 4, and 5 of the **WUST-WU BBA Articulation Agreement** address these issues. In effect these provisions establish a standardized method to evaluate and transfer for credit.

#### 4.4 Lessons learned

Of the many lessons learned the central lesson was: learn and understand each other's "*academic culture*". This is accomplished by exchanges of students, faculty and program administrators. This will lead to a shorter timeline for program design and implementation.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dr. Yunchuan Zhang, - as a pioneer he had the vision and courage to initiate this process.

It is important to acknowledge Dean Kailing Pan of WUST SOM and Dean David Sollars of WU SOBU whose support of this endeavor was a factor that allowed that it reached a successful conclusion.

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Associate Dean Dr. Russ Smith, who had the academic integrity to make sure we did not take any "short cuts" along the way. Because of his insistence on "following the rules", we have an agreement that will meet the expectations of both WUST and WU and at the same time have a quality program.

And finally, to the chairman of the Pacific Rim Group, Dr. Bob Boncella, who had the willingness and tenacity to drive this project to completion. Without his efforts this may not have happened.

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