

A Study into the Important Elements of a Masters Degree in Real Estate

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Abstract. This paper reports the methodology utilized by the members of the University of San Diego's Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate to develop a program and curriculum for graduate studies in real estate. It emphasizes the potential alternatives and describes the choices made by Center faculty regarding the type of program, the desired topics and skills to be taught, course content and delivery. The results indicate that the essential need of any graduate real estate program is to provide up-to-date, high quality real estate education that fosters the development of technical, social and technological skills.

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Introduction

This article describes the process used by the faculty and staff of the University of San Diego's Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate in the creation of a graduate level program in real estate. In the latter part of the 1990s, the Policy Advisory Board for the real estate program began discussing the creation of a graduate real estate program. In 2000, the real estate faculty and staff started laying the groundwork for such a program. In 2002, both faculty and staff accelerated their efforts, exploring the websites and materials of existing programs, as well as literature on real estate education. The faculty relied on the academic literature concerning real estate education, discussions with several focus groups and a task force, as well as results from two surveys: graduates of an established real estate program and real estate professionals from the San Diego community. Using the information from these sources, a program and curriculum was created for graduate studies in real estate. The research methodologies employed demonstrated that real estate is a complex asset and the real estate industry is a multidisciplinary field.

The varied and complex nature of real estate studies, including real estate law, real estate finance, real estate appraisal, real estate equity investments, urban land economics, real estate development, secondary mortgage markets and real estate asset management, require more than a two or three course sequence. Professionals in the real estate industry need skills beyond the traditional graduate business education, with an emphasis on the important multidisciplinary aspects of real estate. Employers want their new hires to be able to "hit the ground running." The market place wants

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technically proficient, technologically trained and socially adept real estate entrepreneurs.

Literature Review

Published literature regarding real estate education emphasizes research in one of two general categories: (1) schools, programs and curriculum¹ and (2) the skill sets necessary to work proficiently and productively as a real estate professional.² Although real estate has been taught since the early 1890s, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s when a major debate began to take place and real estate education began to take two separate paths: a multidisciplinary approach (Graaskamp 1977, 1978, 1984) and a financial management approach (Dasso and Woodward, 1980; and Boykin, 1985). Real estate educators were not in agreement on the state of the discipline. More importantly, as real estate struggled to find its place as part of the common body of knowledge in business administration, the entry level course covering a variety of real estate topics, Real Estate Principles, remained an elective in many of the programs (Carn and Rabianski, 1986).

In the 1990s, some educators continued to question the lack of evolution in the curriculum of existing real estate programs.³ In addition, research findings showed a glaring separation between curriculum requirements and constituent needs (Wells and Williams, 1993). Notwithstanding, several programs challenged the traditional teaching methods and curriculum, emphasizing that learning stood the best chance of occurring when lessons to be learned mimicked real-life situations (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998). Concurrently, some real estate educators agreed that real estate should have a social ethic to gain academic respectability (Graaskamp, 1977; Boykin, 1985; and Pearson, 1988).

Today, the development and management of a graduate real estate program and its curriculum are limited by two common issues. First, among real estate academicians, there is a lack of agreement over a common body of knowledge that should form the core course offering for any program. Second, it appears that many curriculums are driven by faculty availability and the willingness to teach these classes, rather than the needs of the industry that will eventually employ the real estate graduate. For example, Weeks and Finch (2002) found that there does not appear to be a single real estate class offered uniformly by schools offering an undergraduate major in real estate. In addition, classes such as real estate law and real estate market analysis require specialization not often available in smaller business schools. There is, however, some consistency within a "typical" undergraduate real estate program. Real estate principles, finance, appraisal or valuation, law and investments are found in the typical undergraduate real estate program.

Various surveys of practitioners indicate that skills highly valued by industry include oral and written communication, negotiating techniques, real estate legal concepts, analytical decision-making, problem solving, computer proficiency, financial statement analyses and team building (Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton, 1998; Weeks and Finch, 2002; and Gair, 2001). In addition, Wells and Williams (1993) emphasize that

the subject matter should be relevant and pertinent to enhance the student's knowledge and make the individual more employable. For a program to be competitive, and therefore successful, Weinstein (2002) believes it must possess several additional attributes such as a faculty who understands the business, a dedication to research and publications, strong industry ties, and provide conferences, scholarships and career opportunities. Finally, according to Richards-Wilson (2002), a program's mission is validated and legitimized when companies hire its graduates.

A growing number of real estate educators believe, as we do, that real estate should be taught as a process of dynamic interactions, rather than as functional areas and historical numbers and facts (Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski 1996). Over the last fifty years a recurring theme in the research continues to emerge. A graduate program must possess an appropriate blend of theory and practice to succeed in the eyes of the real estate industry.⁴ As stated by Graaskamp (1977:63), the University of Wisconsin program "expects to produce a master who has the creativity of Leonardo da Vinci, the sensitivity for the natural world of John Muir, and the political humanity with cash management for profit of James Rouse." The remainder of this paper focuses on the results of our research, which includes surveys that were given to alumni of the real estate program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and to local San Diego real estate professionals. The objective of this research is to gain a better understanding of graduate level real estate curriculum, the skills required by industry and the method of course delivery.

Research Process

The investigation began with the examination of the websites and materials of several graduate real estate programs in the United States. Two types of graduate programs were readily apparent: a Masters of Science ("MS") and a Masters of Business Administration ("MBA") with a concentration in real estate. Additional sources provided by industry were also examined. The findings indicate that although real estate is an extremely complex and expensive asset, there are relatively few graduate degrees that specialize in it. As illustrated in Exhibit 1, there are only about a dozen specialized MS real estate programs in the country and many of them are focused on finance or development. Very few are multidisciplinary in their approach to the study of real estate. Through the literature review, focus groups, surveys and a task force, evidence was gathered to support the development of a new MS program in real estate at the University of San Diego. Specific constituents were queried on the type of graduate program (MS or MBA), delivery method, topics or courses to be covered and skill sets to be learned.

Several research methodologies were used to ascertain the need, structure and content of a graduate degree in real estate. From July 2001 to September 2002, six professional focus group sessions were held. This was followed by an email survey in the fall of 2002. Two cohort groups were surveyed: real estate alumni that graduated with a real estate degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and real estate professionals in the San Diego area. Finally, a small group of professionals were asked to review and provide comments about the content and delivery of the curriculum and

Exhibit 1
Alternative Real Estate Programs in the U.S.

School	Degrees Offered	Years to Complete	Unit Hours	Students ^a	Years in Operation
University of Southern California	MRED/MS/MBA	11 mos/2 yrs/1 yr	44/63/26 units	30/40/2 and 30/20/2	16/36
University of Wisconsin-Madison	MS/MBA	1-2 yrs/2 yrs	30+ /60 units	20/20	52
MIT	MSRED	1 yr	93 units	30	18
New York University	MS	1 yr/2.5 yrs	38 units	40/200	14
John Hopkins University	MS	2 yrs/5 yrs	40 units	6/199	13
San Diego State University	MS/MBA	2 yrs/1 yr	60/30 units	2 MBA students	38/42
Georgia State University	MSRE/MBA	1.5 yrs/1.5 yrs	36-51units	8 & 5/25 & 35	43
Pennsylvania State University	MS/ MBA	1-1.5 yrs/2 yrs	30+ /48 units	1 MS student	20
University of Pennsylvania	MBA	2 yrs	57 units	66	18
University of Denver	MBA/IMBA/MRCM	1.5-2 yrs/2 yrs/1 yr	72-88/70-88/64 units	20/15/65	94/64/40
University of North Texas	MS/MBA	1 yr	30 units	12	4/16
Texas A & M	MSFINC/MBA/MLERE	1.5 yrs/2 yrs/1.5 yrs	36/53/37 units	3/15/ and 28	25/24/33
Columbia University	MSRED	1 year	37 units	n/a	New

Notes: Data from *The Directory of Real Estate Development and Related Education Programs*, Urban Land Institute (2001).

^aFull and part-time.

other aspects of a potential graduate real estate program once it had been designed. The data collection methodologies are:

Focus Groups. Six focus groups were held with members of the Policy Advisory Board (PAB), Residential Committee and the Commercial Committee. Each focus group included between ten and twenty individuals. The PAB focus group had representatives from both residential and commercial real estate, typically the president, CEO, or chairman of their respective companies. Some local companies were represented, but others were national in scope. The representatives of the commercial and residential focus groups were mid to upper management professionals employed by San Diego-based firms engaged in title insurance, escrow, accounting, law, brokerage, development, construction, planning, architecture, engineering, investment, advisors, lending, management or appraisal. All groups received and responded to an outline of a mock program and an oral presentation regarding the mock program.

Surveys. During the fall of 2002, surveys were sent to two different constituencies: alumni from the real estate program of the University of Wisconsin–Madison and San Diego-area real estate professionals. The respondents were asked attitudinal questions regarding desired attributes of the school and program, skill sets to be learned and subjects that should be included in the curriculum.⁵ Seventy-five San Diego-based professionals were asked to complete the survey; 33 completed surveys were received for a response rate of 44%. The survey was also emailed to 235 Wisconsin alumni. The survey was sent out twice with 45 completed surveys for a response rate of 21%. The 27% overall response rate is relatively high because individuals were targeted who either work with or are interested in the real estate program at the University of San Diego (USD), or are affiliated with an individual faculty or staff in the program (particularly for the Wisconsin alumni responses).

Task Force. Once the focus groups were concluded and the surveys were completed, a draft proposal of the program was reviewed by the USD School of Business faculty and a small task force of real estate professionals. Task force members responded quickly, usually with strong opinions and suggestions for program changes.

Results and Analysis

Focus Groups

During each focus group session, people were asked questions concerning courses, course delivery and desired skill sets. The sessions revealed the need for a full-time cohort-based program, with the flexibility to include a small group of part-time students. Participants also helped determine course offerings and validated the usefulness of a project-based curriculum, which is now a major component of the new MSRE program at USD. This type of project-based course includes a critical emphasis on active learning where industry-sponsored projects provide “real-life” educational opportunities for students and direct connection to the professional community. The course permits sponsoring companies to gain important overall market knowledge or a detailed analysis provided by competent graduate students.

Surveys

The surveys utilized attitudinal questions and a Likert Scale where 5 equals strongly agree and 1 equals strongly disagree. Survey results helped determine course offerings, delivery method and the skills needed for real estate graduates. As an added bonus, over 23 respondents indicated that they might be interested in a Masters of Science in Real Estate program if offered at USD.⁶ Interest in a full-time versus part-time program was evenly split. Exhibit 2 details descriptive statistics of the two cohorts of respondents. The majority of Wisconsin graduates held a Masters of Science degree. In contrast, close to 50% of the San Diego-based real estate professionals had undergraduate degrees, with the remainder being a combination of the traditional MBA degree and law.

The two cohorts have similar levels of overall experience with the Wisconsin graduates having 17 years and the San Diego-based professionals an average of 11 years. The

Exhibit 2 Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

	Wisconsin Real Estate Professionals (%)	San Diego Real Estate Professionals (%)
Real Estate Degrees Held^a		
BBA	38	22
BBA (Other)	0	26
MS	78	0
MBA	8	4
MBA (Other)	2	26
PhD	6	0
JD	2	17
JD/MBA	0	9
Other	2	0
Average Years of Experience	16.96	10.87
Range	1–27	1–32
Average Years in Current Position	5	8
Current Title		
Senior Management	46	26
Vice President/Regional Manager	30	17
Senior Analyst/Associate	14	13
Loan Officer	2	5
Broker	0	9
Attorney	0	13
Other	8	17

Note:

^aSome respondents have more than one degree so the total is > 100%.

groups also have similar experience in their current positions. By current job title, the Wisconsin alumni are slightly more senior, although a significant number of the San Diego-based real estate professionals surveyed were brokers, attorneys and other job titles that indicates they are independent but could be senior level.

Universally, the respondents wanted a graduate real estate degree with a diversified curriculum (see Exhibit 3). One question listed alternative course topics that could be offered in a real estate curriculum and asked the respondents to rank the topics. Respondents were in agreement on a large number of the key topics that should be part of a graduate program. However, the San Diego-based real estate professionals rated two specific courses higher than the Wisconsin alumni: development of real estate and asset/property management, although the mean rating of the latter course was not statistically significant.

Fortunately, for most of the real estate programs in the U.S., the findings indicate that real estate professionals feel the core classes that are typically offered in a real estate program are all important. However, there were four courses that are not typically offered in a real estate program that were ranked in the top 10 by survey respondents: Capital Markets, Real Estate Brokerage/Leasing, Portfolio Management and Planning and Land-Use Controls. In addition, it is interesting that Real Estate Law is lower on the list than one might have expected as it is often the second real estate course added to a program.

The courses that were ranked at the bottom of the list for the real estate professionals are a bit surprising. Both cohorts seem to be in agreement that basic accounting, federal taxation and estate planning are all relatively low in priority, although the San Diego-based professionals gave estate planning a higher mean rating that was statistically significant.

The largest difference in mean ratings between the two cohorts that was statistically significant was the need for a course focused on technology, with a mean rating of 4.23. Close to 90% of the Wisconsin alumni agreed or strongly agreed that this topic was important in a graduate program while slightly over 50% of the local real estate professionals rated the course topic as important, with 41% neutral on the topic.

Exhibit 4 details the results from respondents queried on desired skills that should be acquired from a graduate real estate program. While the results are somewhat mixed, financial skills and communication skills were consistently rated the highest while statistics and technology-related skills were rated the lowest. All of the skills had mean ratings greater than 3.0. Comparing the two groups of respondents, the only statistically significant difference in the mean ratings was the need for basic financial analysis skills with the Wisconsin alumni rating this skill set as a more important skill set than the local respondents.

Several additional questions were asked of the Wisconsin alumni about their experiences with the real estate program offered at that institution. Exhibit 5 details their reaction to the statement that the Wisconsin program adequately covered a

Exhibit 3 Important Topics in Graduate Real Estate Program

Real Estate Course	Wisconsin Real Estate Professionals						San Diego Real Estate Professionals					
	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating** (n = 45)	Std. Dev.	Ranking	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating** (n = 33)	Std. Dev.	Ranking
Real Estate Investment	100	0	0	4.87*	0.34	1	97	3	0	4.66*	0.55	
Project Analysis (DCF, NPV)	98	2	0	4.84*	0.42	2	88	13	0	4.53*	0.72	5
Real Estate Finance and Lending	100	0	0	4.80	0.40	3	97	0	3	4.73	0.63	1
Real Estate Markets	91	7	2	4.67	0.71	4	97	3	0	4.55	0.57	4
Valuation of Real Estate	96	2	2	4.62	0.65	5	97	3	0	4.64	0.55	3
Real Estate Economics	88	11	0	4.53	0.69	6	100	0	0	4.50	0.51	6
Capital Markets	94	4	2	4.49	0.69	7	84	15	0	4.30	0.73	8
Real Estate Law	94	4	2	4.49	0.69	7	76	21	3	4.18	0.98	9
Real Estate Brokerage/Leasing	93	4	2	4.44*	0.69	8	72	25	3	4.03*	0.86	11
Portfolio Management	80	16	4	4.29	0.89	9	68	23	10	3.87	0.96	12
Planning and Land-Use Controls	84	16	0	4.27	0.72	10	79	19	3	4.16	0.85	10
Technology (ARGUS, GIS)	86	9	4	4.23*	0.89	11	53	41	6	3.75*	0.95	13
Construction Process/Procedures	71	22	4	3.80	0.89	12	63	22	16	3.69		14
Asset/Property Management	71	22	6	3.80	0.87	12	72	16	13	4.03	1.06	11
Development of Real Estate	72	16	13	3.71*	0.94	13	94	3	3	4.41*	0.84	7
Basic Accounting	67	29	4	3.71	0.79	13	61	26	6	3.66	1.12	16
Corporate Ownership	56	33	11	3.60	0.89	14	58	29	13	3.68	0.98	15
Architecture/Construction	60	24	16	3.49	1.04	15	63	22	16	3.69	1.00	14
Federal Taxation	51	40	8	3.49	0.92	15	54	31	6	3.41	1.13	17
Estate Planning	22	42	35	2.78*	0.97	16	50	25	14	3.13*	1.18	18

Notes:

* Indicates difference in means between the cohorts is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

**Mean response based on a Likert Scale where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

Exhibit 4 Essential Skill Sets for Graduate Real Estate Students

Real Estate Course	Wisconsin Real Estate Professionals						San Diego Real Estate Professionals					
	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (1 and 2)	Mean Rating** (n = 45)	Std. Dev.	Ranking	Agree (4 and 5)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (1 and 2)	Rating** (n = 33)	Std. Dev.	Ranking
Basic Financial Analysis	100	0	0	4.85*	0.36	1	83	6	11	4.21*	0.98	3
DCF Analysis	100	0	0	4.85	0.36	1	89	6	6	4.58	0.84	1
Written Communication	97	3	0	4.70	0.53	2	89	6	6	4.53	0.84	2
Time Value of Money	97	3	0	4.67	0.65	3	89	6	6	4.53	0.84	2
Presentation Skills	91	9	0	4.61	0.66	4	72	22	6	4.16	0.96	4
Economics	94	6	0	4.33	0.60	5	82	12	6	4.11	0.83	5
Industry Based Software	66	28	6	3.88	0.91	6	67	22	11	3.79	0.92	6
Database Skills	50	41	9	3.59	1.10	7	78	17	6	4.16	0.90	4
GIS	39	36	24	3.12	1.05	8	44	39	17	3.42	0.90	7
Statistics	31	47	22	3.09	0.96	9	34	44	22	3.26	0.93	8

Notes:

* Indicates difference in means between the cohorts is statistically different at the 0.05 level.

** Mean response based on a Likert Scale where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

Exhibit 5
Adequate Topic Coverage for Wisconsin Real Estate Professionals

Real Estate Course	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating* (<i>n</i> = 49)	Ranking of Importance
Valuation of Real Estate	92	4	4	4.65	1
Project Analysis (DCF/NPV)	94	4	2	4.55	2
Real Estate Economics	80	8	2	4.40	3
Real Estate Finance	92	6	2	4.40	3
Real Estate Investments	90	8	2	4.39	4
Real Estate Markets	80	14	6	4.20	5
Real Estate Law	78	14	8	4.00	6
Real Estate Development	74	16	8	3.94	7
Planning and Land Use	65	35	0	3.90	8
Capital Markets	61	20	19	3.45	9
Corporate Ownership of Real Estate	43	35	22	3.31	10
Federal Taxation	39	45	16	3.20	11
Basic Accounting	30	43	26	3.10	12
Portfolio Management	18	37	44	3.00	13
Public Finance	31	35	35	2.94	14
Estate Planning	26	39	34	2.78	15
Real Estate Brokerage	20	43	37	2.73	16
Construction Process	26	27	47	2.67	17
Property Management	18	37	44	2.51	18
Architecture/Construction	16	27	57	2.37	19

Note:

* Mean response based on a Likert Scale where 5 = very adequate and 1 = strongly inadequate.

specific topic. The research clearly demonstrates that the classic courses were covered sufficiently, particularly valuation, project analysis, economics, finance investments, markets and law (all with an average rating above 4.0). However, the results show that the program may be somewhat weak in the following areas: architecture, construction, property management, construction process, brokerage, estate planning and public finance. These topics all had mean ratings below 3.0.

For the most part, Wisconsin alumni stated that they were very satisfied with the program. When questioned whether courses had the appropriate scope, the mean response was 4.45, with over 90% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the course topics were appropriate. In addition, the graduates were also in agreement that the Wisconsin focus on including live, project-based courses helped them to better understand the real estate asset.

When queried about delivery method, the Wisconsin graduates responded that the full-time day program was important or very important for their program. As illustrated in Exhibit 6, a large majority of the MS students indicated the full-time day structure was important, or very important for their program. The mean rating for this question was 4.44. The MBA students did not show as strong a preference, as the mean rating dropped to 4.25, but they also found this form of course delivery to be important. Responses were similar when graduates were asked if a similar educational experience could be obtained with a two-year, part-time program. For the students working on their MS degree, less than 20% agreed with the statement, while the MBA students were split in their opinions on the importance of the program structure.

Another relatively unique aspect of the Wisconsin program that is different from the typical graduate programs at USD and other universities is that many of the introductory courses are cross-listed with graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in the same course. As illustrated in Exhibit 7, the MS students were relatively neutral about the classroom makeup, although 41% did not agree with the statement that a combined class would be distracting. The MBA students at Wisconsin were relatively split on this statement, while the undergraduate students clearly felt a combined student body was not a distracting factor to the success of their educational program. The San Diego-based real estate professionals were much more likely to agree that combining graduate and undergraduate students in a classroom would be distracting. The only statistically significant difference in the mean ratings between the Wisconsin alumni and the San Diego-based real estate professionals was the response of undergraduate real estate students with the San Diego-based professionals more likely to feel that combining the graduate and undergraduate students would be distracting.

A Recommended Masters of Science Degree Program⁷

Given the research results, a graduate real estate program should be specialized, completed in one year and should confer a degree in Masters of Science in Real Estate (MSRE). The MSRE should offer a real estate-focused curriculum that will

**Exhibit 6
Structure of the Wisconsin Program**

Types of MS Programs Offered	Respondents with an MS-Real Estate Degree					Respondents with an MBA-Real Estate Degree				
	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (1 and 2)	Mean Rating* (n = 39)	Std. Dev.	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating** (n = 4)	Std. Dev.
Full-Time Program Important	85	15	0	4.44	0.75	75	0	25	4.25	1.50
Possible w/ PT Program	18	18	64	2.26	1.14	50	0	50	2.75	2.06

Notes:

* Indicates difference in means between the cohorts is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

** Mean response based on a Likert Scale where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

Exhibit 7
Combining Graduate and Undergraduate Students Would be Distracting

Degree Program	Wisconsin Real Estate Professionals					San Diego-Based Real Estate Professionals				
	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating*	Std. Dev.	Agree (%) (4 and 5)	Neutral (%) (3)	Disagree (%) (1 and 2)	Mean Rating*	Std. Dev.
MS Real Estate	15	44	41	2.62	1.07	na	na	na	na	na
MBA Real Estate	25	25	50	2.25	1.50	44	22	33	3.14	1.35
Undergrad Real Estate	0	18	84	1.47*	0.80	46	18	36	3.00*	1.55
Other	na	na	na	na	na	71	7	21	3.86	

Notes:

* Indicates difference in means between the cohorts is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

** Mean response based on a Likert Scale where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

interactively develop the specialized skills needed by real estate professionals. The program should further provide students with the leadership, communication and interpersonal skills necessary to compete for careers at the middle to upper management level or on an entrepreneurial basis. Finally, a substantial number of “live” project-based courses should be included so that students can develop a full appreciation of the many different facets of the modern real estate profession.

Desired Skill Sets

The present research and existing literature indicate that the technical skills used in the industry are prerequisites for successful entry into the real estate industry. While financial analysis is a primary skill as it can be applied to the decision-making process, there are a host of other topics and skills that should be included in a real estate program: market valuation, economics, law, brokerage, development and management.

The courses in the graduate real estate program at USD are designed to produce professionals who have:

- Decision-making skills, including financial and quantitative analysis;
- The experience to evaluate uncertainty and risk as it relates to real estate investment, development, valuation and management decisions;
- A clear understanding of the complex nature of the modern world of real estate and how the various players and partners fit into the process that makes communities viable places to live, work and play;
- The ability to use and apply the major technology tools available in the real estate community today, including financial modeling with Excel, ARGUS and various market-related databases such as CCIM Site To Do Business and Costar, which are used by real estate professionals;
- The skills to become a socially responsible and ethical leader;
- Negotiation skills and an understanding of the necessity for ethical conduct within the real estate profession;
- An understanding of the types of real estate issues facing professionals in the twenty-first century;
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- Business writing, oral communication and interpersonal skills; and
- Demonstrate effective teamwork and leadership skills.

The real estate program at USD focuses on providing students with a solid foundation in the many different disciplines that make up the real estate profession. Discussions of the political and social implications of real estate decisions are incorporated throughout the curriculum. In each class, leadership skills, negotiation tactics and ethical decision-making are emphasized. Through traditional lecture style classes, prominent guest speakers and project-based courses, students are exposed to a variety of real estate problems and are given the opportunity to explore alternative problem-

solving techniques, including state-of-the-art computer technology. Finally, the program includes a significant level of hands-on faculty⁸ and real estate community involvement by offering conferences, internships, mentorships, advising and networking opportunities with the local San Diego community.

With the emphasis on the development of socially responsible, moral and ethical behavior, the USD graduate real estate program highlights the unique and important role real estate leaders' play in building communities. Not only for current residents but, more importantly, the real estate graduates will be reminded that their decisions have long-term implications that can significantly affect future generations.

Proposed Courses

The MSRE degree at USD consists of 12 courses and 32 units that are primarily cohort-based. Two courses, Real Estate Process & Market Analysis and the Real Estate Roundtable Series, are offered in a relatively unique format that provides students with important networking opportunities. Through these courses, students will have concentrated time together (one-full week and three weekend seminars) where they will have the opportunity to create life-long relationships among themselves and professionals in the real estate community. An added benefit of the cohort-based program is a potentially strong alumni network among the real estate graduates translating to strong support for the program as graduates begin to work in the real estate professional community.⁹ In addition, with luncheon speakers and seminar leaders, students will be exposed to real estate executives representing alternative career paths on a local, regional, national and international platform.

Initial Overview Course. The MSRE program begins with an overview course introducing students to the real estate process and highlighting core real estate fundamentals. The course includes discussions about the principles of real estate, socially responsible leadership and negotiation skills, as well as an initial exposure to the ethical issues found in the real estate industry. The introductory real estate course focuses on understanding the complex nature of real estate and that decisions made by real estate professionals today have long-term ethical consequences.

This course is delivered in an intensive, week-long format in late August, before the start of the fall semester. All incoming students begin with this course. Students are introduced to the various technology-related tools that will be used in their coursework including financial modeling with Excel; the use of ARGUS and various real estate-related databases; and other real estate research tools that will enable the student to more clearly understand the dynamic aspects of real estate markets.

Core, Specialized and Capstone Courses. Five core real estate courses are offered as traditional three-unit courses. More specialized courses are two-unit courses. A real estate negotiation and ethics course and a feasibility course are offered as capstone courses designed to pull together elements from the entire program. In addition to the orientation course, the graduate curriculum includes:

- **Core Courses:** Residential Finance and Housing Policy; Real Estate Law, Ethics and Public Policy; Commercial Real Estate Finance and
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Investment; Urban and Suburban Development Process; and Commercial Real Estate Valuation.

- **Specialized Courses:** Urban Land Economics; Commercial Real Estate Capital Markets; and Strategic Management of Real Estate Assets.
- **Capstone Courses:** Negotiations and Ethical Issues in Real Estate; and Real Estate Feasibility Analysis.

Real Estate Roundtable Series. The real estate roundtable series is offered three times as a weekend seminar during the course of the program. Each roundtable is designed to bring in specialists to cover a topic that is too narrow for a semester long course but relevant and detailed enough to need a deeper discussion over an extended time period. Topics include architecture, federal taxation, estate planning or the dissection of a successful development project and feasibility analysis.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the varied and complex nature of real estate studies requires more than a two- or three-course curriculum. Real estate professionals are interested in a graduate educational program that focuses on developing a skill set that is needed to succeed in a fast-paced and ever changing business environment.

This study is limited because it focuses on graduates from one graduate real estate program and members of only one real estate community. This research can and should be expanded to include real estate professionals from other graduate programs as well as real estate professionals from outside the region. The University of Wisconsin at Madison was chosen because of its consistent reputation as one of the top graduate real estate programs in the country. In addition, one of the researchers had direct experience with the program and direct connections to its real estate alumni. A follow-up study with a broader sampling of schools could shed additional light on qualities of successful graduate real estate programs.

Professionals in the real estate industry require skills beyond the traditional graduate business education, leading to an understanding of the importance of the multi-disciplined aspects of real estate. The MSRE offered at USD was developed based on the survey responses of graduates from the University of Wisconsin-Madison real estate program and San Diego-based real estate professionals. In addition, six focus groups of real estate professionals and a smaller task force of real estate professionals were used to fine-tune the program. A relatively unique program, the MSRE at USD borrows from the University of Wisconsin-Madison program, but is differentiated by an emphasis on developing socially responsible real estate professionals. As stewards of a finite natural resource, communities and individuals involved in the real estate industry have social, moral and ethical responsibilities to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the community at large. This is necessary to ensure that the needs of all constituents are recognized and addressed. The professional real estate community wants and needs graduates that are technically proficient, technologically trained and socially adept real estate entrepreneurs.

Endnotes

1. For example, see Brown (1965); Hoppe (1967); Ferguson (1975); Graaskamp (1977, 1978, 1984); Dasso and Woodward (1980); Brown (1981); Boykin (1985); Carn and Rabianski (1986); Wells and Williams (1993); Nourse (1995); Black, Carn, Diaz and Rabianski (1996); Epley (1996); Weeks and Finch (2002); and Weinstein (2002).
2. See Kinnard (1968); Kelly (1990); and Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton (1998).
3. See Diaz (1993); Berens (1992); and Epley (1996).
4. For example, see Weimer (1956); Kinnard (1968); Ferguson (1975); Graaskamp (1977); Brown (1981); Butler, Guntermann and Wolverton (1998); Souza (2000); Hartigan (2002); Weinstein (2002); and Sheldon (2003).
5. Survey available on request.
6. Existing real estate students were also surveyed; 57 completed surveys were received. These results are not included in this analysis, but another 42 individuals indicated an interest in a graduate real estate degree program.
7. One of the reviewers suggested that the financial analysis of the program be included in this paper. A financial analysis of the program was performed, reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper and specific to USD, it is available on request.
8. “Hands-on faculty” refers to faculty that have a significant amount of industry experience, and/or who use “live” projects and provide a significant amount of experiential learning to take place over the course of the semester.
9. One of the main reasons the Wisconsin real estate program was chosen for this study is that they have an alumni network of over 2000 individuals, many of whom are active with their educational program.

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