The Creation of the Corporate Strategy and International Business group at UMBS:
Near-term and Long-term Implications for the School

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Pablo Galiana's thoughtful article in the MSJ this week (Opinions -- UMBS: Global reach or a domestic focus, November 1) led me to write this short piece about the creation of the Corporate Strategy and International Business (CSIB) group at UMBS. Pablo quite rightly argues that all managers need skills to manage business activities that cross national borders, often many borders. No matter where a company's headquarters sits, its people must understand the dynamics of business and competition that unfold and shape activities in countries and markets throughout the world. Moreover, the managers must have the detailed functional and organizational skills that people need to manage the diverse business systems and relationships that arise within global businesses and among global networks of corporations. To help develop the needed understandings and skills, students in all programs at UMBS need to take advantage of the many global opportunities that the school offers. Moreover, UMBS needs to increase the number of formal and informal global opportunities that we offer, both in our classes and in the complementary activities that take up so many hours of student, staff, and faculty lives.

The creation of the CSIB group is a key step that the school is taking in order to increase the intensity of the formal and informal global business education that we offer at UMBS. The new group pulls together the activities of the Corporate Strategy (CS) group and the International Business (IB) group in order to help develop the intrinsic inter-connection of strategic management, international business activities, and global business environments. UMBS has long had underlying strength in both the CS and IB departments. The faculty members in the two groups are among the world leaders in scholarship in their fields. This scholarship, in turn, has led to the creation of a strong set of elective courses across the two groups, providing education in general topics of strategy and international business and in business activities that focus on regions of the world that are undergoing major business transformations, such as China, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. At the same time, though, we came to believe that creating a new group would offer new opportunities to expand our scholarship in general and our course portfolio in particular. Therefore, we created the CSIB group. The goal of the CSIB group is to create the preeminent center in the world for scholarship concerning strategic management in domestic and international competitive contexts.

Now, what will the new CSIB group mean for UMBS students and the UMBS community at large? Let's first consider the immediate implications and then turn to longer term developments.

In the short term, there are three major implications, concerning existing courses, new courses, and participation in student initiatives.
First, UMBS will continue to offer all courses that were listed under either the CS or IB groups, either within the CSIB group or within other departments such as Finance, Marketing, and OBHRM. At the same time, the content of the courses will evolve by drawing on additional relevant material. For instance, traditional strategy courses will continue to increase their international content, traditional international courses that fall within CSIB will continue to increase their strategic management content, and traditional international courses that will now fall within other departments such as Finance and Marketing will increase their disciplinary breadth and depth. The bottom line here is that UMBS will both retain and strengthen our existing set of courses.

Second, we will be able to develop new courses more quickly, as business issues emerge in different regions of the world and as new general issues in global strategy and business environments arise. The new CSIB group has a much greater critical mass of faculty members, so that we can adjust more effectively as we need to offer new material. In addition, the diffusion of responsibility throughout the school to undertake international scholarship means that any department can introduce international courses and material that arises in their areas. The bottom line here is that UMBS will be better able to introduce new course material addressing international business issues.

Third, the CSIB group offers a range of faculty expertise that will help develop student initiatives that would benefit from faculty participation. CS and IB faculty traditionally have been very active in initiatives such as student clubs and conferences, projects and internships, and directed studies courses. This involvement will increase even further in the future, as we have a larger pool of faculty members to match with emerging needs.

In the longer term, the creation of the CSIB group will allow us to increase the scope of UMBS scholarship concerning strategic management and international business. CSIB faculty are among the world leaders for research concerning emerging markets, corporate revitalization, regional studies in Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, labor and wage management and policy, industry location, technology strategy, business dynamics, business combinations and reconfiguration, international R&D, inter-organizational relationships, corporate environmental management, and other areas. In addition, CSIB faculty play key roles in executive education and teaching programs throughout the world. This expertise will fuel course development in the degree programs and continuing executive education.

We are excited about the potential that the creation of the new group has created for UMBS.