

Developing a Green Marketing and Supply Chains Course for General Education Credit at the Freshman Level

Joyce A. Young
Indiana State University

Sara Williams
Indiana State University

Paul F. Schikora
Indiana State University

This paper describes the efforts of a marketing program at a midwestern public university to develop a freshman-level marketing course for the Foundational Studies program that would be open to all undergraduate students. Faculty in the Marketing program felt that inclusion in the Foundational Studies curriculum could provide an avenue of growth for the Marketing major. The course development process is described in detail and examples of pedagogical materials from the course are included. Initial feedback from the course's first offerings suggests that the course can play a role in the recruitment of students to the major.

INTRODUCTION

Four-year colleges and universities require undergraduates to complete a given number of credit hours in general education. These courses are often referred to as core curriculum, general education, or foundational studies. For most students, such courses dominate their freshman year. Subject areas typically include laboratory sciences, mathematics, history, literature, social and behavior sciences, fine and performing arts, global perspectives, cultural diversity, health and wellness, non-native languages, ethics and social responsibility.

General education courses generate a tremendous number of credit hours in terms of student enrollment. Such courses can also serve as a recruitment tool to draw students to majors they may not have previously considered. Thus, subject disciplines that contribute courses to the general education curriculum can benefit in terms of increased generation of total student credit hours (SCHs). This growth can often justify the allocation of additional faculty lines, part-time instructors, and/or smaller class sizes for students in upper division courses.

This paper describes the efforts of a marketing program at a midwestern public university to develop a freshman-level marketing course for the Foundational Studies program that would be open to all undergraduate students. While some marketing programs offer a first-year experience (FYE) course that

contains some discipline specific content for their majors (Green, 2011), such was not the objective in this case – a broader reach was desired. A review of the general education curriculum of the five other public universities in the state showed that no such offering existed. Therefore, if the Marketing program was successful in its course development efforts, it would be the only public university in the state with such a general education course.

RATIONALE FOR THE COURSE

The university was experiencing continued enrollment growth for the last several years. As a result, there was an increasing demand for lower-division Foundational Studies offerings in terms of sections and courses. There was also a university-wide directive to grow SCH's in all academic programs. Concurrently, the university's operating budget continued to be cut by the governor each year (Mitchell, Palaciou, & Leachman, 2014), so no new financial resources were available. However, reallocation of existing resources within the university was possible. Thus, faculty in the Marketing program explored inclusion in the Foundational Studies curriculum as an avenue of SCH growth in the program.

Course development efforts could not begin without first receiving buy-in from several important constituencies. The dean of the College of Business agreed to fund staffing of the course. Housed in University College, the coordinator for the Foundational Studies curriculum was also supportive and encouraged faculty to consider a course related to social responsibility. Given that the majority of freshmen now belong to Generation Z, a segment that is more environmentally conscious than previous generations (Ottman, 2011), development work began on a course in Green Marketing and Supply Chains. The work was subsequently aided by a faculty stipend from the university's Institute for Community Sustainability. Though the course would be open to all undergraduate students for Foundational Studies credit, it would not count as an elective in the Marketing major or minor since it was a 100-level course.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Many universities teach Green Marketing as an upper-division elective in their marketing majors (e.g., City University of New York, Auburn University, University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, Iona College, Montclair State University). No example of a freshman-level course was found in an extensive search of university offerings. However, upper-division syllabi that were available on the Internet, and pedagogical articles related to green marketing and sustainability course development were helpful in terms of potential content and pedagogical approaches (Rudell, 2011; Borin & Metcalf, 2010; Bridges & Wilhelm, 2008; Coops et al., 2015; Mintu & Lozada, 1994; Nicholls, Hair, Ragland, & Schimmel, 2013; Rundle-Thiele & Wymer, 2010).

Learning Objectives

We took a parallel approach to developing the course because we needed to address the numerous learning objectives of Foundational Studies courses as well as content objectives for the marketing discipline. Upon completion of the development work, the course proposal was reviewed by the University College Council. Many of the council members had extensive experience teaching first-year students (i.e., freshmen). Thus, the guidance given by the Foundational Studies learning objectives, as well as several council members provided the pedagogical skeleton for the course.

The Backward Design Model of instructional design by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) was consulted since the development effort would work backwards from the learning outcomes provided by the University College. Thus learning experiences and instructions would be designed to meet the identified desired results (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Table 1 provides an overview of the general Foundational Studies (FS) and the Ethics and Social Responsibility (ESR) requirements of the university. Table 2 displays the subsequent description, marketing-related objectives, topics and grading information created for the course.

TABLE 1
REQUIRED LEARNING OBJECTIVES & SKILL APPLIED ELEMENTS
FOR A FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES COURSE *

The Foundational Studies curriculum seeks to create well rounded individuals, students therefore have the opportunity to take courses in science, history, literature, behavior sciences, and the fine arts. The Foundational Studies program also seeks to prepare students for active lives as citizens and includes courses in ethical behavior, social responsibility, and global perspectives.

Learning Outcomes for Foundational Studies (FS)

1. Locate, critically read, and evaluate information to solve problems.
2. Critically evaluate the ideas of others.
3. Apply knowledge and skills within and across the fundamental ways of knowing.
4. Demonstrate the skills for effective citizenship and stewardship.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of diverse cultures within and across societies.
6. Demonstrate the skills to place their current & local experience in a global, cultural, & historical context.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical implications of decisions and actions.
8. Express themselves effectively, professionally, and persuasively both orally and in writing.

Ethics and Social Responsibility (ESR) Learning Objectives

1. Understand the historical and philosophical bases of ethical decision-making and social responsibility.
2. Use independent thinking, critical analysis, and reasoned inquiry when assessing personal, professional, and societal issues.
3. Demonstrate the ability to make personal and professional decisions by applying knowledge and skills obtained from the study of ethics and theories of social.
4. Articulate how one's ethical framework and understanding of social responsibility shape one's actions.

Ethics and Social Responsibility (ESR) Skill Applied Learning Requirements

1. Explicitly demonstrate how the curriculum will develop critical thinking skills.
2. Explicitly demonstrate how the curriculum will develop information literacy skills.
3. Include a graded writing component, which whenever possible is developmental.
4. Gives students the opportunity to apply what they are learning to real world scenarios.
5. Must include opportunities for experiential learning or community engagement.
6. Must give students the opportunity to identify and solve problems.
7. Must incorporate opportunities for students to critically read and analyze text-based materials beyond textbooks.

* Material pulled directly from the Foundational Studies website at the midwestern university.

TABLE 2
COURSE DESCRIPTION, MARKETING OBJECTIVES, TOPICS, AND GRADING

Course Description

Students will investigate the growing field of "green" marketing and supply chain management from an ethical and social responsibility applied course perspective. Emphasis will be placed on the role and power of consumers and supply chain members to shape a sustainable society through their purchasing, consumption, and disposal behavior. Topics include: sustainable business strategy; green product design, branding, and packaging; green marketing communications; pricing and distribution of eco-friendly goods and services, green procurement, production, and logistics. Students will learn to make a profit while making a difference, using case studies, current events, and individual and group projects.

Course Objectives Related to Marketing

- Acquire an understanding of and appreciation for the concepts and theories associated with ethical and social responsible behavior relating to marketing and supply chain contexts.
- Acquire an understanding of and appreciation for the concepts, principles and strategies associated with green marketing and supply chain management.
- Be empowered as future managers and consumers who would act and advocate on behalf of sustainability.
- Create an activity to celebrate Earth Day on campus and then complete a plan to promote the event.
- Complete & present an analysis of an advertising campaign for a “green” product, service, or idea.

Course Topics

- Introduction to Marketing
- Ethics & Social Responsibility in Marketing
- Green Marketing& Sustainability
- Profiling the Green Consumer
- Green Products
- Green Pricing and Promotions
- The Green Supply Chain
- Green Procurement
- Green Production
- Green Logistics and Packaging

Course Grading

The course grade is based upon the following calculation:

8 Weekly Writing Assignments (25 points each)	= 200 points	25%
2 Projects (1 individual & 1 group; 100 points each)	= 200 points	25%
Class and Discussion Board Participation	= 200 points	25%
2 Exams (100 points each)	= <u>200 points</u>	<u>25%</u>
Total	= 800 points	100%

Course Activities

To address the numerous requirements, various pedagogical tools were developed including weekly writing assignments, projects, mini-case scenarios for in-class group discussion, experiential exercises, and exams. Two trade books discussing green marketing (Ottman, 2011) and green supply chains (Emmett, Stuart, & Sood, 2010) were chosen to provide the primary reading material for the course.

Weekly Writing Assignments

Eight weekly writing assignments were created to meet FS learning outcomes 1 through 8 (see Table 1). These assignments require students to reflect on substantive topics, and through peer critiques and discussion to consider alternative interpretations that challenge their thinking (Critical Thinking); require them to find and evaluate empirical support for their opinions (Information Literacy); apply reflection and empirical outcomes to experiential learning activities (Applied Skill Learning), and better communicate their ideas (Effective Communication). These activities also require students to assess their own behaviors (Citizenship), analyze consumer and institution behavior across cultures and countries (Diverse Cultures & Global), and critique actions of business institutions (Ethics). The writing assignments contain questions relating to content from book chapters, journal articles, YouTube videos depicting various corporate sustainability efforts, and corporate sustainability and social responsibility reports. Students use electronic databases to obtain corporate social responsibility and sustainability reports and also journal articles discussing “green” behavior from a global perspective (ESR learning requirement 7). Students critically evaluate such primary source materials in light of their understanding of ethics and social responsibility. The corporate sustainability and social responsibility reports are obtained by visiting www.csrwire.com. The weekly writing assignments serve as the basis for lectures and class discussion. Several guest speakers with industry experience in sustainability supplement the materials with their class visits. Throughout each weekly class session, students sit in the same pre-assigned discussion groups. Each group is created by the instructor and contained diverse membership in terms of gender, class level, and major.

Projects

Two projects, shown in Table 3, were created for the course. The Promoting an Earth Day Event is an individual project and the Advertising Campaign Analysis is a group project. Group membership carries over from the weekly writing assignment discussion groups. Both projects involve FS learning outcomes 1, 2, 6, 7, & 8 (see Table 1). The individual project also provides students the opportunity to practice the four major stages of the writing process (ESR learning requirement 3): planning and development, drafting, revising, and editing.

TABLE 3
PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Promoting an Earth Day Event

This project has individual students creating activities that celebrate Earth Day on the university campus. Once an activity has been created, the student will then create a plan to promote the event. The project requires a three-page written report. Each student will also give a “5 minute” presentation to the class. Student papers will be created using the four major stages of the writing process: planning/development, drafting, revising, and editing.

Advertising Campaign Analysis

This project has student teams conducting analysis of an advertising campaign for a “green” product or service. The analysis will provide assessments as to the degree of credibility or “greenwashing” by producers and perceived effectiveness of the campaigns. Each team will present their results to the class by using a Powerpoint presentation.

Mini-Case Scenarios

As required by Foundational Studies, the course was designed to provide weekly opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking (ESR learning requirements 1, 6) in terms of “green” behavior of individuals and producers within an ethical and social responsibility context. A series of marketing and supply chain management mini-case scenarios for in-class group discussion were created. Examples of each are provided in Table 4. The scenarios allow students to discuss how a person’s beliefs relating to social responsibility impact their behavior.

TABLE 4
EXAMPLES OF MINI-CASE SCENARIOS FOR IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION

Marketing Scenario

Using your knowledge gained from the readings, please complete the mini-case below:

As the marketing intern for a local grocery store, the owner has asked you to research the possible implementation of a Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) program. She is interested in determining several factors: 1) the percentage of customers that most likely would participate in the program, 2) should the store provide new bags free of charge to customers or charge a nominal price, and 3) do other grocers in the area use such a program.

As you develop your answer, also incorporate aspects of the following concepts:

- a. Personal ethics checklist
- b. The 4 social responsibilities of marketing

Supply Chain Scenario

Using your knowledge gained from the readings, please complete the mini-case below:

As the transportation manager for your company, you manage a fleet of long haul tractor trailers. You are considering making it mandatory for your drivers to use IdleAir (www.idleair.com) whenever possible at truck stops that are on their designated routes. IdleAir provides an alternative to idling engines during mandatory rest periods. Should you make this a company policy that all truckers must follow? What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing so?

As you develop your answer, also incorporate aspects of the following concepts:

- a. Personal ethics checklist
 - b. The 4 social responsibilities of marketing
-

Experiential Learning Exercises

Students also complete a series of experiential learning exercises (ESR learning requirement 5) involving topics relating to green marketing and supply chains. Several of the exercises were obtained from the Internet, while others were created in the development process. Students report their experiential learning results via the course discussion board. Examples are provided in Table 5.

TABLE 5
EXAMPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXERCISE

Marketing Scenario: Are green brands more costly?

Go e-shopping. Visit either Walmart.com or Target.com and investigate brands by comparing one “regular” and one “green” item in each of the three product categories: household or kitchen cleaners, laundry detergents, and paper products. You will have 3 sets of comparisons. Make sure you have the same size of container or package for your price comparisons. Also, document any evidence on the “green” item’s label of the use of eco-labels, trademarks, symbols, or green certifications. Share your results on this week’s discussion board.

Supply Chain Scenario: Let’s make recycled paper.

Use the following website by watching the video to help you produce your own recycled paper and bring it to class:

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ess05.sci.ess.earthsys.recycledpaper/making-recycled-paper/>.

Take a photograph of your results and share it on this week’s discussion board.

Exams

Two take-home exams of equal value were created that covered a specific amount of reading, class material, and experiential learning exercises. An example of the mid-term exam is provided in Table 6. The exams are applied in nature, thus allowing students to work with real world scenarios (ESR learning requirement 4) relating to green marketing and supply chains. The chosen examination strategy used to assess the learning of green marketing and supply chain management content within an ethical and social responsibility perspective requires the assimilation and application of knowledge (ESR learning requirement 2) and assesses achievement of FS learning and applied skills objectives.

STUDENT FEEDBACK ABOUT THE COURSE

Enrollment for the course was set at 40 students for each of the first two class sections offered. Each section filled during the preregistration period. Even though the course was a freshman-level offering, there were numerous sophomores and some juniors and seniors enrolled in the two sections. Toward the end of each semester, a total of 65 students agreed to complete a short self-administered questionnaire (approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board) that requested their feedback about the course. No individual student identifiers were collected and no extra credit was offered as an incentive to participate. To eliminate the possibility of a dual-role conflict, the data collection process was conducted by another marketing faculty member rather than the course instructor. Survey results were shared in the aggregate with the course instructor once the due date for final grade entry had passed.

Of the 46 freshmen and sophomores that participated in the survey, only five students were declared Marketing majors and none were declared Supply Chain Management majors. As a result of enrolling in the course, 10 of the 41 non-Marketing majors at the freshmen/sophomore level indicated they were now considering a Marketing major and 5 students indicated they were now considering a Supply Chain Management major. The Marketing program was encouraged by the percentage of students now interested in the major. In terms of the overall sample (n=65), 9 students indicated they were now considering a minor in Sustainability.

TABLE 6
EXAMPLE OF MID-TERM EXAM

For the first 3 questions, please use the scenario below:

Becky Wilson, a brand manager for a national apparel manufacturer, is asking you, the “Green” expert, for input relating to three aspects of a marketing plan for a proposed new t-shirt product line. She wants to make the marketing plan as “Green” as possible in terms of Product, Price, and Promotion. Use concepts from *The New Rules of Green Marketing* (Ottman), Chapters 4, 6, and 7 to guide your discussion below.

1. How can we make the t-shirt line as green as possible? Be comprehensive and specific with your answer.
 2. What concerns should we have in terms of the pricing strategy if going green? Be comprehensive and specific with your answer.
 3. What and how should we communicate to our target market that we have a green product? Be comprehensive and specific with your answer.
 4. Watch the following two Youtube videos: *The Scarecrow* and *Back to the Start*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMfSGt6rHos>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUtnas5ScSE>
Based on the two videos, briefly describe the social responsibility activities of Chipotle. What did you find to be the most impressive aspect of those activities? And why? Please incorporate concepts from the chapter *Marketing and Social Responsibility* (Dickson) to help you discuss each video.
 5. All students in the class have individually proposed an Earth Day activity and have created promotional plans for such. Please identify and describe your Top 5 student efforts (excluding your own) and discuss the degree to which you feel the ISU community would participate in the 5 activities. Please use Chapter 2 in Ottman (*We Are All Green Consumers*) to help you justify your rating of the effectiveness of each plan to foster participation.
-

In terms of specific feedback about the course, students were asked seven questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale as shown in Table 7 below. Overall, feedback was positive for each question. Most students felt the subject matter was an important topic, the course delivery was interesting, and the course was worth their time. Most encouraging for the Marketing program in terms of results, however, was that a majority of students indicated that they would recommend the course to other students at the university. Finally, and not unexpected, student interest in sustainability and in marketing had increased as a result of the course.

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

As with all new courses, the delivery of the course did present several challenges and concerns that were not anticipated during the course development stage. One rationale for the course creation was the potential recruitment of students to the marketing major that may not have otherwise considered it. As such, the course was designed and targeted for first year students. Reaching students at this stage before they are too invested in terms of credit hours in other programs would more easily facilitate a change in major or possibly identify a major for undecided freshmen. Unanticipated was the number of sophomores, juniors, and seniors that enrolled in the sections prior to preregistration days for freshmen. While overall, the course grew the Marketing program’s SCH’s, it could have enrolled more freshmen if space allowed. To address this concern in future semesters, the Marketing program will not open enrollment for class sections until freshmen are able to preregister.

TABLE 7
STUDENTS' OPINIONS RELATING TO THE COURSE

Evaluation Item	Mean* (SD)**	
• This class was always interesting.	4.06	.81
• This class was well worth my time.	3.94	.95
• We are studying an important topic in today's world.	4.45	.61
• I would recommend this class to all students at the university.	3.94	.95
• My interest in sustainability has increased as a result of this class.	4.00	.75
• My interest in marketing has increased as a result of this class.	3.80	.94

*On a five-point scale anchored by 5 = "strongly agree" and 1 = "strongly disagree." (n=65)

** (SD) = standard deviation

Having a mix of lower-division students and upper-division students presented an additional unanticipated outcome. Throughout the semester, several upper-division students complained to the instructor that the workload of the course was too demanding for a freshmen-level course. In other words, they had selected a 100-level course because they assumed it would be an "easy A" grade without much homework or active learning. The instructor did attempt to explain to these students that the course was designed with a great deal of input and guidance from the University College Council and received its subsequent unanimous approval of all aspects of its pedagogical delivery. However, on the positive side, the instructor also felt that having a mix of lower-division and upper division students provided opportunities for mentoring and modeling opportunities between the two levels, which was reflected in group membership. To possibly prevent the preconceived "easy A" belief in the future, the instructor will discuss such with the class during the first week of the semester.

CONCLUSION

Many public universities have had react to reduced state funding over the past decade. Strategically, universities often set a goal of increasing enrollment and thus tuition dollars to offset the funding decreases. Unfortunately, with many universities competing for a shrinking pool of eligible college-aged students this strategy has its limitations and leaves institutions with a net loss in funding. This has led to greater competition for scarce faculty resources within the university, leaving departments and academic programs to develop their own strategies for success in such a financial environment. In many instances, additional resources can be justified through increased SCH generation at the department or program level. One method to accomplish this is to offer courses to a wider audience outside of the department or program. Developing courses that satisfy general education requirements at the university level is one way to do that.

This paper presented the development of a freshman-level course in green marketing and supply chains by the Marketing program, motivated by two factors. First was the desire to increase SCH generation with the existing set of faculty. The other was more altruistic in nature – the desire to create and deliver a course that is current and relevant to today's college students. The development of this course required close coordination with the university body responsible for the general education (Foundational Studies) program at this campus. Maximum enrollment in the course over its first two semesters was quickly reached, satisfying the initial primary motivation for its development. Results from student surveys indicate that most students had a positive reaction to the course, with a number indicating

an interest in choosing or switching to majors in Marketing or Supply Chain Management, further improving the likelihood of increased enrollment and SCH generation in the department. Students also indicated they generally thought the course covered an important topic, and a number expressed a desire to minor in Sustainability as a result of taking the course.

Several challenges and concerns were identified during the pilot project, primarily related to the large number of upperclassmen (about 30% of course enrollment) who enrolled in what was designed as a freshman-level course. Future delivery will be modified to address those issues. A positive side benefit of having juniors and seniors in the course was the ability to have them serve in mentor roles to the younger students. Overall, the course has been successful in satisfying its objectives and will continue as a staple offering in the department.

REFERENCES

- Borin, N., & Metcalf, L. E. (2010). Integrating sustainability into the marketing curriculum: Learning activities that facilitate sustainable marketing practices. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 32(2), 128-139.
- Bridges, C. M., & Bryce Wilhelm, W. (2008). Going beyond green: The 'why and how' of integrating sustainability into the marketing curriculum. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 30(1), 33-46.
- Coops, N. C., Marcus, J., Construt, I., Frank, E., Kellett, R., Mazzi, E., Munro, A., Nesbit, S., Riseman, A., Robinson, J., Schultz, A., & Sipos, Y. (2015). How an entry-level interdisciplinary sustainability course revealed the eenefits and challenges of a university-wide initiative for sustainability education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 16(5), 729-747.
- Emmett, S., & Sood, V. (2010). *Green supply chains: An action manifesto*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons.
- Green, H. (2011). Freshmen marketing: A first-year experience with experiential learning. *Marketing Education Review*, 21(1), 79-87.
- Mintu, A., & Lozada, H. R. (1994). Green marketing education: A call for action. *Marketing Education Review*, 4(1), 17-23.
- Mitchell, M., Palaciou, V., & Leachman, M. (2014). *States are still funding higher education below pre-recession levels*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from <http://www.cbpp.org/research/states-are-still-funding-higher-education-below-pre-recession-levels>
- Nicholls, J., Hair, J. F., Ragland, C. B., & Schimmel, K. E. (2013). Ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability education in AACSB undergraduate and graduate marketing curricula: A benchmark study. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 35(2), 129-140.
- Ottman, J. (2011). *The new rules of green marketing: Strategies, tools, and inspiration for sustainable branding*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Rudell, F. (2011). A green marketing course for business undergraduates. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, 1. Retrieved from <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/10506.pdf>
- Rundle-Thiele, S. R. & Wymer, W. (2010). Stand-alone ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability course requirements: A snapshot from Australia and New Zealand. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 32(1), 5-12.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.