

## **Establishing, Growing, and Running a Sales Program: An Analysis of Certified University Sales Centers**

*By Lukas P. Forbes, Terry Loe, Robert M. Peterson, Robert C. Erffmeyer, and Michael C. Boehm*

Over the last decade, the growth of sales training at academic institutions has been remarkable. The University Sales Center Alliance has seen membership more than double over the last decade, and quadrupled since the formation of the organization. This growth, in large part, is due to increasing demand from corporations searching for qualified sales people to fill their ranks, coupled with a limited supply of recent college graduates with the appropriate sales skills. However, academic literature has not addressed how universities can assist in meeting this industry demand by establishing a university sales program or Sales Center. This research delineates a set of eight guidelines and instructions using data and information obtained from the experiences of nearly three dozen universities with established, certified programs.

### **INTRODUCTION**

While university sales curriculum has existed for decades (Kellerman and Hekmat 1989) and corporate sales training dates back to the 19th century, there has been a recent emphasis on university sales programs as corporations find them a valuable source for hiring qualified entry-level sales people. According to a survey conducted by a leading North American job website, over 1/3 of sales managers are unable to fill open sales positions due to the lack of qualified candidates (Davidson 2013). This dearth of qualified candidates, in turn, has helped spur sales program growth at the university level. Evidence of this growth can be seen by the expansion of the University Sales Center Alliance (USCA), an organization developed to promote the

sales profession in higher education and industry, from 14 to 35 university members in the last six years.

This growth and expansion by both universities and corporations has brought with it many challenges. As universities make efforts to start or improve sales programs, numerous questions emerge with regard to mission, support from university administration, funding, staffing, budget management, and corporate interaction. A public regional university in a small town in the Midwest, for instance, might have distinctly different challenges compared to a larger, private college located in a major metropolitan area. Additionally, some universities might support a sales program with regard to funding, while others might expect Centers to be completely self-funded via external sources. However, in spite of the importance of sales education and a desire for many universities to consider launching a program, a general template for universities interested in starting a sales program does not exist. Relatively little information can be found on best practices and challenges of existing sales programs.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to provide a guide for aspiring university programs and current sales programs with information relevant to starting a sales program, as well as maintaining or improving an existing sales program. Importantly, this research provides guidance for a wide range of schools with regard to small versus large programs, and programs at different stages

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of maturity. Hence, this research will address eight main topics of discussion regarding development of a sales program, provide discussion and relevant information on each topic, and also provide data from a recent survey of USCA programs. Topics to be addressed include the state of sales in higher education, the benefits of Sales Centers to universities, funding models for Sales Centers, corporate involvement, the role of the director, staffing concerns, curriculum issues, and technology concerns.

## BACKGROUND

Methodology: Data was obtained from 30 North American universities housing sales programs within University Sales Centers. These universities hold membership in the University Sales Center Alliance as either associate members or full members (<http://www.universitiesalescenteralliance.org>). Each participating Center Director was asked to take a survey with a variety of questions related to running the Center. These 30 universities, including both private and public schools, are characterized by a diverse range of student enrollment, and represent a response rate of 93% .

University Sales Center Alliance: The bulk of the content within this research stems from the universities housed within the University Sales Center Alliance (USCA). The USCA is currently a 35-member body of North American universities with Sales Centers. Each of these Centers is required to have a Center Director and an advisory board, as well as be a recognized entity of the university's College of Business. In addition, to attain full member status (attained by 19 of the 35 universities), a university must have at least three sales classes, video recording capability, and activity within the sales academic community.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Sales Education Surge: The State of Sales in Higher Education

Professional sales curriculum in higher education has historically been sparse, though salesmanship course offerings have been reported back to 1943-44 by Kellerman and Hekmat (1989). Weilbaker and Williams (2006) stated a salesmanship course was offered in 1914 at Illinois State University. While *Personal Selling* has been historically viewed by higher

education as a “trade school” profession, the attitude by academia and industry toward sales as an academic pursuit has experienced a recognizable shift (Weilbaker 2004; Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy 2011), with interest in sales education likely continuing its recent accelerated upward trend. This trend appears grounded in the mid-1980's, when colleges and universities began acknowledging the credibility of the sales discipline by offering more extensive sales curriculum and by establishing university administration recognized sales-related Centers and institutions.

The first Center for Professional Selling was established at Baylor University in 1985, and was soon followed by Northern Illinois University (1989), and the University of Akron (1992). By 2002, eight universities had identifiable, established Sales Centers or Institutes. The leaders of these Sales Centers created the University Sales Center Alliance (USCA) which currently boasts 35 members. The significance of universities creating Sales Centers lies in the investment and commitment by the university rather than a single faculty with an interest in engaging in sales-related research and teaching sales curriculum. The college, in which the Sales Center is housed, has made a commitment beyond supporting only one faculty line and has made additional investments in facilities and, in many cases, support staff. Previous forays by universities in teaching sales curriculum involved low risk and very little commitment.

Historically, if a sales faculty or instructor left the university, the sales emphasis often disappeared. In some instances, the university might have retained another sales-focused faculty, but in many situations, it was not pursued. The difference under current conditions is that having a Sales Center entails a commitment of resources by the university. For instance, a university often commits to two or more tenure-track faculty. This commitment means paying at least two salaries for faculty in the sales area, as well as the added resources associated with tenured positions. Additionally, there is frequently a commitment of university space, dedicated technology, and support services for the Center or program. In some instances, the university will agree to a fully dedicated, or shared, administrative person. In essence, the university has put down a “stake” in the sales discipline and made a long-term commitment to the area.

Beyond the members of this alliance, there are several universities with Sales Centers, programs, or institutes that are in the process of making commitments to professional sales education. For most, their focus is on sales research and instruction with goals and missions to improve and enhance sales education at the university level, and ultimately, raise the attractiveness and credibility of the sales profession.

Weilbaker (2004) suggested that this upward trend has been driven primarily by industry, its need to reduce training and other costs associated with the sales force, and an overall greater demand for qualified sales talent. This conclusion is supported by the larger number of corporations sponsoring university-related sales competitions and other sales program initiatives across the United States. As a result of the decline of government funding for higher education, colleges are more reliant on corporate funding to further the goals and missions of these institutions. Universities with the foresight to develop sales programs and offer specific sales curriculum have benefited from higher levels of corporate involvement. All stakeholders generally benefit from these offerings due to the tension between the low supply of qualified sales talent and the continuing high demand for qualified entry-level salespeople.

The creation and maintenance of a university-related Sales Center has the potential to greatly benefit the university, but some resistance often remains by fellow academics and administrators. This may be explained in part by the politics of departments and colleges where faculty wish to maintain the status quo and protect “turf” within a department or college, but also by the general lack of understanding of the sales discipline by the faculty and administration and the benefits associated with the presence of a sales program. A commitment to and “buy-in” from university and college administrations are requirements for a Center to be formed.

## **2. Articulating the Benefits of Professional Sales Education to University Stakeholders**

Most faculty are aware of the importance of gaining the support of the university and, specifically, the college administration, for any initiative to be successfully undertaken. As noted, the resources required for a Center may include acquisition of space for a physical

presence and role-play facilities, official recognition of the program, and faculty course release time for administrative and development work associated with the program staff. Regardless of the level of financial support obtained from industry, a Sales Center is reliant upon support and acknowledgement of the center/program by the administration.

The benefits of having a sales program are outlined in another section, but when “selling” the administration, it is important to note a couple of those benefits. Most often, explaining the usefulness of the Center is a tremendous asset to university development and appeals to deans, provosts, and presidents. It should be noted that similar programs have developed meaningful and effective relationships for the university. Additionally, the benefit of bringing many recruiting organizations on campus, that otherwise would not visit, needs to be emphasized. A second benefit highlights how a Center helps students find lucrative careers, setting the university apart from others.

Beyond focusing on the benefits, it is equally important to prepare a business plan. The business plan should include: (1) the mission statement and purpose, (2) an organizational or Executive summary (overview of how the Center will accomplish its goals and mission), (3) key team members and their qualifications, and (4) the organizational structure (director, associate directors, staff, etc.). We also recommend including (5) “The Need for a Sales Center” section, which might include the latest Bureau of Labor Statistic numbers. The latest report notes a strong support for sales-related position openings and projected openings through 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Additionally, (6) a “Business of the Center for Professional Selling” section will draw more focus to the details and goals of what the Center will be doing and, specifically, what it hopes to accomplish. This may include the number of students involved, as well as plans for the facilities, number of corporate partners and affiliates, and a detailed plan regarding how this will be achieved. Finally, include a (7) “Financial Plan and Budget.” Funding of the Center can be realized through a variety of means and will be addressed in another section.

After creating the business plan, but before approaching the administration, sales faculty should solicit the support of the business community and develop an

informal advisory board. Aspiring Centers should ask for letters and calls of support to the administration via personal phone calls or face-to-face meetings. Industry more often gains the attention of college administrators and will assist in making a strong case for creating a Sales Center. While a business plan is a fine tool for soliciting industry partners, sales education in universities is really a common sense solution to their needs and a partnership with a university carries many benefits for the business community. Representative of the benefits to the college is the statement by one dean: “Membership in the USCA will allow our program to engage in regional and national networking with other top business programs. In short, we share USCA’s goal of advancing the sales profession through teaching, research, and outreach. We believe that developing true sales leaders is a key driver to the world economy.”

### 3. Potential Funding Models for Sales Centers

Funding models and philosophies for funding a Sales Center are varied. However, the interest by industry in engaging universities and partnering in the sales area is strong, and the ability to attract resources from the business community can be very robust. Numerous variables can impact the amount of funding one can expect: geographic location (small college town vs. large metropolitan area), the amount of time the director

or others engage in fundraising, the number of generous alumni or corporate donors, and the relationship between the Center and the university fundraising department.

A survey of 30 Sales Center Directors by the USCA revealed that of those responding, only 22% have an endowment, which means that an on-going fundraising effort occurs in the vast majority of instances (See Table 1). Endowments range from \$500,000 to \$5 million with 67% possessing an endowment between \$500,000 and \$1,500,000. It is important to note that having an endowment does not preclude additional time invested in raising funds for the Center; in fact, only 3% of the directors indicated that they did not engage in fundraising at all. Funding will typically occur with some level of directorship involvement. Only 12% of those responding indicated they participated in 60% or less of the fundraising, while 87% indicated they participated in 80% or more of the fundraising efforts, and 59% indicated they participated in all of the fundraising efforts. Ninety-seven percent of the directors indicated that they engage in fundraising at some level and the administration expects their involvement. Student fees, a common way for universities to raise additional funds for premium majors, are not yet common at the sales program level: currently, only one Center charges a student fee of \$25 for sales classes.

**Table 1 Fundraising**

<i>Approximately what percentage of the funds resulted from your participation in fundraising?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
100%	17	59%
90 to 99%	6	21%
80 to 89%	2	7%
70 to 79%	0	0%
60 to 69%	0	0%
50 to 59%	1	3%
40 to 49%	0	0%
30 to 39%	1	3%
20 to 29%	0	0%
10 to 19%	1	3%
0 to 9%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Are you expected to engage in fundraising?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	28	97%
No	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

Total operating budgets range from under \$25,000 (31%) to over \$500,000 (7%), and 72% have operating budgets of \$100,000 or less (Table 2). These numbers do not include faculty and/or director salaries, but may include the director stipend where it is funded by outside sources. The median budget is \$50,000 to \$99,999. Obviously, the extent of the activities of the Center, as well as the ability (time and effort) to raise funds, helps determine the budget. Control of the program budget is strongly recommended and desired. Though this is not always the case, 79% of the directors maintain this control.

**Table 2 Budget Control**

<i>Who primarily controls the sales program budget?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Sales Center Director	23	79%
Department Chair	6	21%
Dean	0	0%
Other	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3 Director Time Investments**

While 97% of the directors surveyed are expected to invest time in fundraising, they hold additional responsibilities and, therefore, must manage their time among those responsibilities which may include interacting with the advisory board and staff, hosting career fairs, etc. (Table 3).

<i>Please identify the percentage of your time spent on the following:</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Average Value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Sales Director Activities	31.38	21.67
Teaching	31.03	19.43
Academic Service	18.45	17.68
Research	19.14	13.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

Only 3% of the respondents have no teaching responsibilities and 77% are expected to conduct and publish academic research (Table 4). The level of research expectations of a Center Director is commonly a constant requirement and must be strongly considered as a university program and/or potential Center Director considers undertaking developing and launching a Sales Center. Other responsibilities beyond fund raising and research are detailed in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 Director Responsibilities**

<i>What other responsibilities do you have? (check all that apply):</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Advisory Board Management	29	97%
Sales Career Advising	27	90%
Organizing Speakers/Presentations	25	83%
Employment/Career Fairs	25	83%
Coaching Students for Student Sales Competitions	25	83%
Managing a Budget	24	80%
Hosting Student Sales Competitions	23	77%
Involvement in Professional Organizations	20	67%
Executive Education/Consulting	19	63%
Managing Staff	17	57%
Student Organization Sponsor	15	50%
Student Academic Advising	15	50%
Other	6	20%

Activities that require funding may include, but are not limited to, the director's salary or stipend, administrative assistant(s), equipment and technical assistance, graduate and student assistants, and other discretionary programs that assist in achieving the professional sales education mission. Some Centers budget for sales faculty and student travel, and most budget for various marketing and promotional materials.

On average, the responding Center Director positions are funded 25% solely by university funds and 25% solely from private funding, but 50% of the Centers require funding by both the university and external sources (Table 5). Director stipends, separate from their normal salary, are funded 50% by both university and sales program sources, regardless of where that funding is secured.

**Table 5 Director Funding Sources**

<i>How is the director position funded?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Combination of university and private endowment/foundation/gift	14	50%
Totally funded by private/foundation/gift	7	25%
Totally university-funded	7	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

Support in the form of program administrative assistants is important to growing and maintaining a Sales Center. Only 55% of the Centers surveyed retain a program assistant: most (56%) are funded solely through sales program resources, while just 13% are funded through a combination of university and Center resources (Table 6).

**Table 6 Administrative Assistant Funding Sources**

<i>How are the program assistant hours for your Center funded?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Sales program	9	56%
University-funded	5	31%
Combination	2	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>

The authors wish to emphasize that without administrative assistance, a Sales Center is limited in its potential growth. Sales Center directors should make every effort to secure help with administrative duties and responsibilities. The university can provide assistance to a Center by assisting with at least some administrative duties. Typical tasks that an assistant performs might include: 1) arranging for meeting space and catering, 2) interacting with students who need information, forms, and access to resources, 3) interfacing with university accounting, 4) communicating with corporate partners, and 5) taking notes and photos at various events and advisory board meetings.

Administrative assistance from graduate or undergraduate students can supplement an administrative staff and, in the absence of any administrative staff or help from the university, may have to provide all of the administrative support. About 52% of Centers receive help from either graduate or undergraduate student workers. Graduate students are more heavily funded by the university (80%) versus undergraduate (53%) (Tables 7 and 8).

**Table 7 Graduate Student Funding Sources**

<i>How are the graduate student hours for your Center funded?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
University-funded	12	80%
Sales program	1	7%
Combination	2	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 8 Undergraduate Student Funding Sources**

<i>How are the undergraduate student hours for your Center funded?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
University-funded	8	53%
Sales program	7	47%
Combination	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>

Some Centers receive assistance from a departmental administrative assistant, who also provides support to other department faculty. Other creative means of gaining administrative and marketing support could include using student-directed studies or offering internships. These students gain insight into sales activities while providing needed support for the professional sales program. Obviously, these types of arrangements need to further the education of the students and their duties should go beyond filing and paperwork (though their responsibilities would not exclude paperwork as all salespeople have to engage in this activity). Student assistants often, for example, not only substantially interact with corporate partners (arranging networking events, inviting partners to competitions and other student events, engaging in satisfaction and research surveys of partners, etc.), but also may be required to perform data input into CRM and Sales Force Automation tools.

Centers have great latitude when choosing their focus: some are more local, regional, or internationally-focused, while others are involved in sales contests or engaged more in research-related activities. The level of these activities requires different fundraising goals. Fundraising, on average, is typically between \$50,000 to \$99,000, with a few schools raising much larger sums (Table 9). National and/or international initiatives require a great deal more time and resources and, in part, explain much of the variance in revenue raised. As a rule, programs that raise higher levels of funds have more dedicated administrative and human resources. The amount of revenue raised is not a reflection of the worth or importance of a program, as raising large amounts of revenue is not the ultimate goal of a Center. Like any other business, Centers should not attempt to become all things to all people and should focus on their individual mission and attempt to secure the resources necessary to accomplish that mission.

**Table 9 Annual Fund Raising**

<i>How much revenue does your Center raise annually?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than \$25,000	7	24%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	4	14%
\$50,000 to \$99,999*	5	17%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	2	7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5	17%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	2	7%
More than \$250,000	4	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*- average level of annual revenue raised.

Various models relating to the contributions levels or partnership fees for corporations exist. Minimum giving levels typically start at \$1000, with the highest levels reaching \$75,000 or more. In view of the benefits organizations receive as outlined in another section, regardless of the level of giving, the organizations receive a very attractive return on investment.

Donations and other revenue generally filter through the University Foundation. Center Directors need to develop a good working relationship with the Foundation. Meeting with the Foundation Director to explain how the Center will be working with contributors will promote a better relationship and improve the outcome when requesting funding for various needs.

#### 4. Corporate Involvement and Benefits

According to a 2007 study by HR Chally, organizations with new college graduates hired into entry-level sales positions from university sales programs experience a 30% lower turnover rate and a 50% faster ramp-up time compared to hiring recent graduates from universities with no sales programs.

Considering that sales force turnover rate has exceeded twice the national average for other positions (Richardson 1999) and organizations report investing \$50,000 to \$75,000 in the first year in each of their individual sales recruits (Futrell and Parasuraman 1984), it is not surprising that corporations are becoming deeply invested in university sales education. An investment in a sales program is small when one considers that employer turnover costs for salespeople can be as high as \$500,000 annually for a mid-sized company (Adidam 2006). Additionally, less experienced college graduates, more often than not, take a longer period of time to become productive. Lowering turnover by 30% and shortening the time to meaningful revenue production could mean tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to the bottom line of the organization per recruit.

Highlighting the above numbers helps corporations understand the tangible benefits of investing in professional sales education. However, corporate involvement needs to go beyond financial resources. Corporate commitment and involvement is essential to the education and preparedness of students for a sales career. The amount of time corporate partners invest on campus visits and other interactions with students is directly correlated with their success in recruiting new sales hires. Some of the forms of involvement are briefly noted below.

**Sales Advisory Board:** The Advisory Board most often includes corporate partners, with position level ranging from a district manager to the VP of sales. Advisory Boards usually meet a minimum of bi-annually and regular contact providing updates on Center activities and accomplishments keeps them engaged. Advisory Board suggestions delivered directly to the Chair/Dean are often more effective than any other voice.

**Guest Speakers:** Centers often provide corporate partners access to classes through speaking opportunities. One suggestion for inviting class speakers is to send a schedule of class topics, dates, times, and instructors for each sales-related class to each of the primary contacts of the corporate partners and allow them to sign-up for the classes and topics. Standing in front of the students in a class is one of the most highly-valued benefits of professional sales programs in the eyes of corporate recruiters. Students gain tremendous insights into the sales profession and an appreciation for the relevance of the material taught, while the partner has the opportunity to share the organization's career opportunities and the company's story. In class, sales role plays offer industry partners the opportunity to participate as buyers/prospects and give feedback to the students, while also setting up a higher pressure learning situation for students.

**Networking Events:** Regularly scheduled informational sessions and social events provide an opportunity for corporate partners to get to know the students and, importantly, for the students to get to know the partners in a less formal setting. Members and past members of the USCA report an average of approximately 95% placement of their graduates (Sales Education Foundation 2013). Students in sales programs often have choices regarding employment which enables them to enjoy numerous offers. For corporations to excel at recruiting success with sales students, they need to be involved. Networking events can include activities such as *Lunch and Learns*, bowling, pizza, and movie nights, corporate open houses, bingo, lunches/dinners, *Dress for Success* events, and golf outings.

**Program Sales Role-Play Competitions:** Sales role-play competitions offer the students the benefits of improving and honing sales skills for higher pressure situations. All corporate partners can participate as judges and/or buyers/prospects for the event and the competition lends the opportunity for industry partners to see sales students in a pressure call. Partners are able to provide valuable feedback as well as develop more meaningful relationships with the students. Numerous Centers use these local competitions to prepare for other regional and national competitions. Partners also have

the opportunity to network and develop relationships with other partners in the same or different industries.

**Corporate-Sponsored Sales Role-Play Competitions:**

Centers can offer a sales role-play competition that utilizes only one organization's representatives as buyers/prospects and judges and promote the event as sponsored by "XYZ" company. This event offers the benefit of highlighting one of the corporations to the students, and several of the organization's representatives are able to get to know a number of the program's sales students, evaluate their sales skills, and develop networking relationships.

**Sales Shadows:** Many Sales Centers require their students to shadow salespeople to experience a "day in the life" of a salesperson, allowing students to experience how concepts and skills learned in the classroom are applied in a real world setting. Some programs have students shadow corporate partners, thereby exposing them to representatives of partners, the company, and the industry. A Sales Shadow is a valuable opportunity for an organization to showcase itself and the opportunities it offers new salespeople.

**Mock Interview Days:** Sales Centers may hold mock interview days for one or more of their corporate partners. This can be a good screening process for the students to identify opportunities they wish to pursue and for organizations to select qualified students for whom they wish to target their recruiting efforts. Corporate Partnership relationships benefit the Center, the students, the university, and the industry partners. Creating opportunities for interaction between and among sales students, sales faculty, and industry is invaluable and assists all parties in achieving each of their goals, as well as the mission of the Sales Center.

## **5. The Role of the Director**

Director responsibilities can encompass all aspects of running the sales program, from establishing the program, obtaining administrative and financial support, developing curriculum, recruiting students, recruiting staff, and then maintaining that program. In a recent survey from the USCA (2012), Directors were asked to identify tasks that they completed as part of their directorship responsibilities (See Table

4). A key element for the director, therefore, is a full understanding of time management responsibilities associated with running the sales program, and the impact those additional responsibilities will have on the traditional trio of faculty activities involving teaching, service, and research.

In addition to the basic compensation package received by a university professor (base salary and benefits), most Directors also receive additional compensation to run the sales program. This additional compensation is a necessity since the job requirements of running the sales program go above and beyond the job requirements of a typical professor position. At USCA schools, compensation typically takes three different forms. First, the director can receive an additional stipend on top of the university salary. Second, the director often receives a course reduction; some universities provide a single course reduction while others provide a two-course reduction in load. Third, the director can receive summer funding via summer stipend or summer research grant.

As with most elements of this research study, the amount of funding for a particular sales program is dependent on the type of institution. Faculty engaged in developing sales programs need to consider the resources of their specific school, the potential size of their sales program, and their corresponding demographic region when considering amount of stipend. Results from a USCA survey indicate that most sales directors receive some of their compensation from endowments or private money. Again, like many other senior leadership positions with academia, securing the financial resources internally and externally to meet the Center's goals warrants a considerable amount of time and strategy.

## **6. Staffing**

Having demonstrated that the sales program will involve multiple levels of courses being taught at multiple levels of a student's undergraduate curriculum process, university sales programs should ensure the program has adequate staffing for their programs. First, this staffing is comprised of the faculty members that will teach the courses within the sales curriculum. The faculty can be some combination of the following: tenure/tenure track Ph.D.; clinical (non-tenurable) Ph.D. or master's level; permanent master's level; and/

or adjunct master’s level faculty. The key for a new program is to balance the quantity of sales courses being taught given the teaching load of each faculty member. Second, this staffing is comprised of individuals who may support the sales program, such as an administrative assistant or a student assistant. Roughly half of USCA schools receive some form of support for either a part-time administrative assistant or a graduate student.

In addition to permanent faculty on staff (tenure/tenure track or full-time clinical), adjunct professors constitute a valuable resource to sales programs for teaching sales students. Adjunct professors typically serve on a semester or annual contract, and can be recruited to teach specific classes based on the needs of the sales program for the upcoming academic year. Adjuncts typically can be found in one of two manners. First, adjuncts may be garnered within the pool of applicants that have an interest in teaching at the university. Second, adjuncts can be recruited directly from corporate partners who have employees with an interest or skill in teaching sales.

**7. Typical Sales Curriculum**

**Table 10 Sales Program Classification**

At a minimum, schools with Sales Centers or Institutes offer at least three sales-specific courses. While these courses may vary, they typically include an entry-level sales course, an advanced sales course, and a course in sales management. Graduates may earn a certificate, concentration, minor, or major in professional sales, depending upon university resources and staffing levels (See Table 10).

<i>What type of sales programs do you offer? (check all that apply)</i>	
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>
Sales Minor	16
Marketing Major with Sales Track/Concentration	15
Sales Major	12
Sales Certificate	12
Other	6

An average class size of 20-29 (DePaul study 2011-12) is realistic due to USCA requirements that sales programs have a maximum of 30 students in entry-level sales classes and 20 students in advanced sales classes. The primary reason for a non-mass lecture approach is the expectation that students will form new behaviors, not just memorize information. Sales education is probably the most role-play intensive field of study at most universities. To be effective, students must model behaviors they are expected to exhibit once they graduate. Recording sales calls provides an opportunity to receive feedback from the professor, peers, or industry executives participating in the role of buyers. A heavy dose of recorded role playing is invaluable, allowing students to create call reports that outline: 1) what they did right, 2) what they did wrong, 3) what they learned, and 4) what they will do differently in the next call.

Various courses exist that can help prepare students for the eventual sales calls they will execute. The USCA asks that programs offer basic and, then, more advanced level courses. There are many different ways to accomplish this curriculum objective, but some commonality exists amongst the sales programs. Most often, the three sales courses offered are an introduction to selling, advanced sales, and sales management. However, there is some variety on what works best, given a university’s broader curriculum, faculty expertise, resources, etc. (See Table 11 for list of potential course titles).

**Table 11 - Most Common Sales Courses (in relative order)**

Basic Sales (various names for the course: personal selling, professional selling, principles of selling, etc.)
Advanced Sales
Sales Management
Internship/Practicum
CRM/Technology
Negotiation

Source: University and Colleges Sales Education Landscape Study - David C. Hoffmeister and Dr. Richard A. Rocco, *DePaul University Center for Sales Leadership 2011-2012*, p. 58-61.

**Table 12: Sales Model Usage by Type and Popularity by Sales Programs**

Relationship Selling (various)	87%
Consultative Selling (various)	84%
Spin Selling (Huthwaite)	74%
Strategic Selling (Miller-Heiman)	54%
Conceptual Selling (Miller-Heiman)	39%
Value Selling (various)	35%
Other	13%

Source: DePaul study, p. 35.

Even within the aforementioned sales courses, great latitude is taken by each program to develop its unique approach to sales education. Some of the programs use relationship or consultative selling, while others choose a specific industry-tested model, like Huthwaite or Miller Heiman, within the classroom. The key involves exposing students to sales models that are widely used by sales organizations, engaging them in experiential exercises utilizing the models, instilling in them more confidence in their sales skills, and providing them an opportunity to enjoy early success in their first sales job. In total, this provides students a professional advantage for when they start interacting with customers. While each model has its advantages, there is no clear choice, mandate, or agreement on which model is best for a sales program (Table 12 presents overview).

While many models exist, sales professors and sales managers tend to agree on what are the most important elements to stress in advanced selling courses. Pelham and Krovitz (forthcoming) noted 28 potential topic areas to cover in such a course. Of the possible content areas, professors and managers ranked each in similar importance on 22 of the 28 elements. The few exceptions include: 1) industry managers placed more emphasis on advanced handling objections, 2) cold-calling techniques, and 3) advanced closing techniques. “To take an idea, product, or service and render it desirable and valuable to a customer is a great challenge. It requires brains, as well as great persistence, optimism,

and resilience” (Broughton 2009). The bottom line is that sales programs have several approaches to use when developing curriculum, and many stakeholders and potential corporate partners willing to help and advise on best practices and effective pedagogy.

**8. Technology Considerations**

Sales programs are strongly encouraged to operate a dedicated sales role-play facility with recording capability, which is a requirement for USCA membership. The intent is for the learners to be able to document their successes and directly observe areas needing improvement. The financial resources available will dictate the technology and environment (elaborate or realistic office labs or a camera to use in the front of a classroom) a new program can expect in a role-play facility. Some programs obtain a generous donor with liberal resources and are able to build out role-play facilities with digital cameras, which include the ability to upload recordings directly to a server for remote student and corporate partner access. Some facilities have one-way glass to view “live” sales role-plays, including new furniture or intercoms to hear role-plays, with some including even more elaborate features. Additionally, more resources allow for a dedicated technology expert to help with recording, editing, passwords, and the ability to troubleshoot technical glitches. Technology assistance is available to roughly half of the schools with Sales Centers (See Table 13).

**Table 13: Technology Assistance**

<i>Does your Center receive administrative technical assistance?</i>		
<b>Answer</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	13	45%
No	16	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the past, most sales programs started with only a video recorder, tripod, blank VHS tapes, and extension cords. This is no longer feasible or effective given technology requirements of the workplace the graduates face. Budgets vary, with some schools establishing a role-play room with as little as \$2500, while other programs may begin with as much as \$1.6 million to invest in a suite of professional role-play rooms that many industry executives envy.

Beyond role-play facilities, technology can be a valuable element throughout the program. While not intended to be an encompassing list, many sales programs use CRM software to help students better prepare for their first jobs in sales. Sales programs often use computer rooms operated by their school of business, with some providing laptops for the semester. Additionally, the affordability of tablets allows many students to be self-equipped.

Depending upon the goals of a sales program, a dedicated or shared phone bank room is evidenced at several Centers. Students are able to cold/warm call prospective clients to offer a variety of services, and depending upon the system, the instructor is often able to listen “live.” Another version of phone technology uses Google Talk to build the student’s ability to communicate directly with potential clients. This resource offers a very inexpensive method to communicate with clients with minimal investment in potentially costly infrastructure.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Perhaps the key element in establishing a Sales Center at any university is for the developing school to have a clear understanding of (a) the goals and mission of their developing Center and (b) the abilities and limitations of their school (i.e., a realistic view of their mission and resources). The USCA is comprised of 35 schools and within that alliance are various types of schools, enrollment sizes, and academic goals. Importantly, each developing school should draw from best practices from all of the certified sales programs, while ensuring the model fits with its specific school’s characteristics. However, while each school will find its own unique path to developing and running a Center, there are certain steps in the process that all schools will face (See Appendix A).

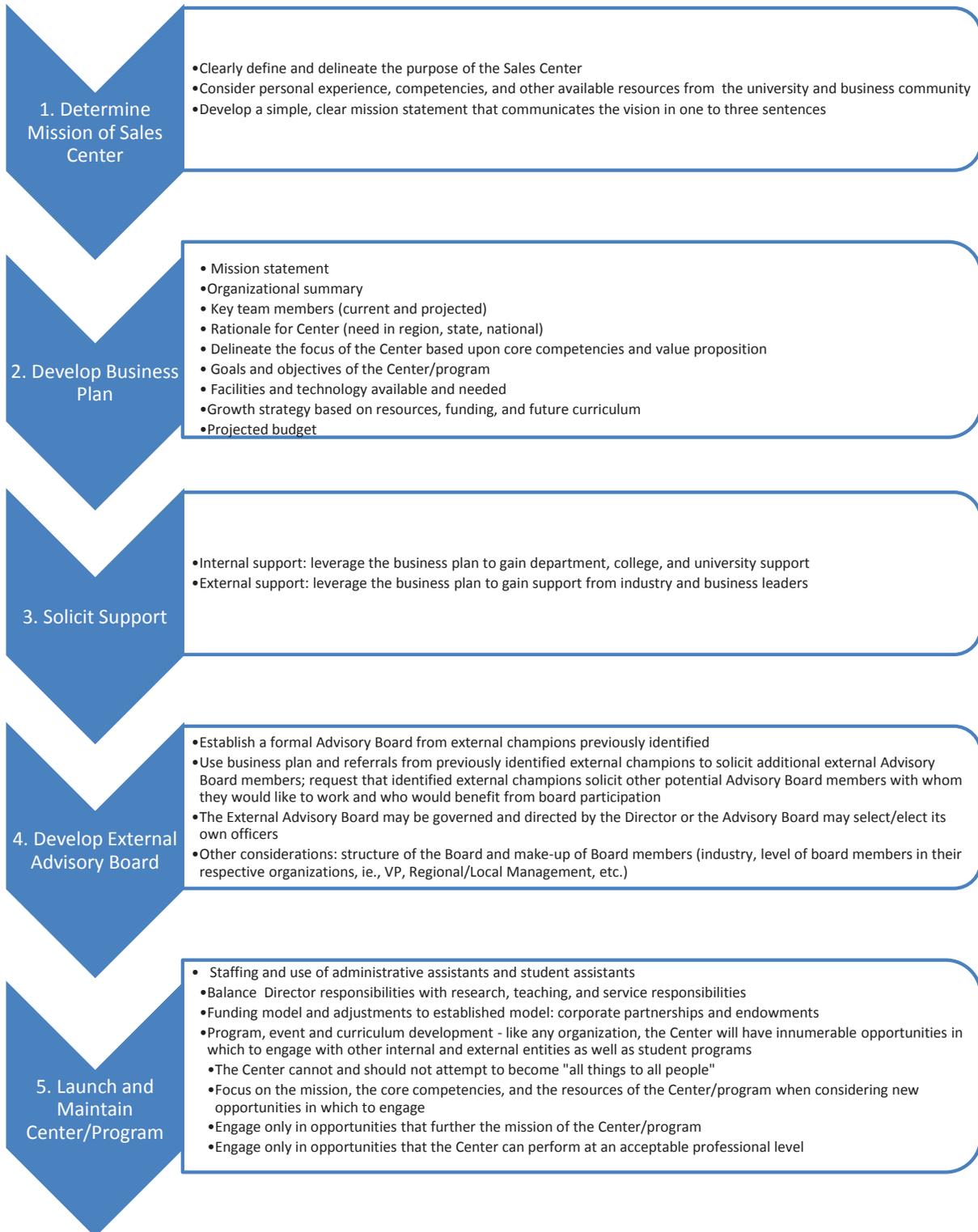
The sales profession and function is integral to the success of business in the capitalist system and, we believe, is responsible for assisting in improving the economies of the world and the quality of life for all people. On its face, our mission as sales academicians is to contribute to the knowledge of this profession and assist others within the profession and those aspiring to be in the profession to engage in sales in the most effective, efficient, and honorable manner that science, research, and common sense allows. By enacting this philosophy, the profession will continue to grow in stature, attract talented people to the sales community, and make positive contributions to society. The academic model is an important strategic initiative that will play an integral role in furthering the profession.

In short, successful certified sales programs require a certain minimum level of support. As indicated in this study, the authors believe five elements are essential for any successful sales program (either a new program or an existing program). First, the program must have a champion who will lead this effort (in the director role), and that director must receive some type of compensation for the additional responsibilities. Second, the program must be able to support its annual initiatives via external funding. Third, the program must have more than one qualified sales faculty member capable of teaching sales courses on an annual basis with consistency (permanent, not adjunct). Fourth, the program must have administrative support, both hierarchical and clerical. Finally, the program and university must be financially willing to invest in basic infrastructure, including role-play facilities and necessary technology. The sales education journey will be wrought with constant challenges, but when measured by the number of young lives improved, it will be a rewarding expedition.

## **APPENDIX A**

The relevant topics that must be considered when establishing, growing, and running a sales program and that are explored here are seldom carried out sequentially. However, we offer a graphic of the steps in which current Sales Centers, for the most part, have followed in the establishment of their respective programs. We would argue from our experience and those of other directors that the sequence presented

below is the most logical and probably the most effective step approach to establishing a program. (The Steps to Establishing a Sales Center figure does not specifically name each of the topic areas included in this paper, but the topics are certainly contained within these steps and should be reviewed and considered when following the steps).



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