



**Sales Education Foundation**  
Elevating the Sales Profession Through University Education

# ***BUILDING A UNIVERSITY SALES PROGRAM***

*An Opportunity to Expand Sales Education at the University Level*

## **Overview**

As any college or university considers incorporating professional sales into their overall business curriculum, there are several considerations. The following outline addresses the most common areas of concern and opportunity as seen by the Sales Education Foundation when developing a professional sales program.

Incorporated are the following:

### **Section I: Key Statistics and Opportunities**

Addresses reasons that a college/university should consider a sales program, particularly for the responsible and effective alignment of graduates to professional opportunities

### **Section II: Program Overview**

Provides an outline of a successful college/university sales program, including Administrative structure, research opportunities and student alignment

### **Section III: Curriculum**

Outlines opportunities for curriculum development

### **Section IV: Available Resources and Potential Partnerships**

Defines potential support opportunities for sales programs

## Section I: Key Statistics and Opportunities

- Over 50% of US college of business graduates entering the workforce, regardless of their major, find a sales role as their first career
  - Florida State University's Sales Institute research suggests some studies find the percentage of marketing majors accepting a job in sales as high as 88% and as high as 60% for all other business majors<sup>1</sup>
- Over 60% of first-time sales people either resign or are terminated from their first jobs<sup>2</sup>
- Of over 4,800 colleges and universities in the US, less than 4% currently host recognized sales programs
- Students from university sales programs, when compared to their non-sales educated peers:
  - Ramp up 50% faster with standard company training
  - Turn over an average of 30% less
  - Save companies approximately \$200K per hire within the first 18 months of employment
- Graduates of sales programs experience, on average, over 90% job placement within 3 months of graduation
  - Comparison: According to the NACE, the percentage of graduating seniors from Class of 2019 who applied for a job and received at least one offer was 52.3%.<sup>3</sup>

## Section II: Program Overview

Based on experience with multiple university recognized sales programs, including multiple top-tier start-up programs, below are some best-practices to assist you in your efforts.

1. Typically, the most efficient way to introduce a sales program onto campus is to start with a certificate program (also referred to as a *concentration*, *emphasis*, *specialization*, etc.).
  - a. This should incorporate a minimum of three sales-specific courses and can include a specialty class such as "Services-Based Selling" or "Financial Sales" as one of the courses. The most traditional initial offering of courses includes: Introduction to Professional Selling, Advanced Professional Selling, and Sales Management.
2. Programs at academic institutions can take years to build. Internally, the program directors must engage the academic senate, the Dean, faculty members, and existing students. Externally, directors must engage recruiters, sponsors, new students, and alumni. On the next page is an example of a successful program set-up as seen by the Sales Education Foundation.

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<sup>1</sup> Florida State University Sales Institute Executive Summary: "Research Shows that Sales Center Education Makes a Substantial Difference in Student Performance After Graduation"

<sup>2</sup> SEF/CareerBuilder Survey 2009

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 2019 Student survey

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Component	SEF Recommendations
<b>Program Model</b>	Organize and implement as Strategic Business Units (SBU's) to promote autonomy and accountability in developing corporate partnerships, funding, curriculum, and research. Employ a minimum of two individuals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="444 380 1317 443">1. One with focus on research and other academic requirements (academically qualified - AQ)</li><li data-bbox="444 443 1317 516">2. One to manage corporate relationships, fundraising, and other 'sales' functions of the program (professionally qualified - PQ)</li></ol>
<b>Curriculum</b>	Include a minimum of three sales-specific courses. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, Introduction to Professional Selling, Advanced Sales, and Sales Management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="444 684 1414 747">• SEF does not recognize general education or marketing courses such as Public Speaking, E-commerce, Intro to Marketing, etc.</li><li data-bbox="444 747 1365 810">• Specialized courses are encouraged such as Financial Selling, Key Account Management, Sales Technology, etc.</li><li data-bbox="444 810 1349 884">• More recent additions to the specialized courses listings include Sales and Social Media, Supply Chain Sales and Ethics in Selling</li></ul>
<b>Research</b>	Conduct quality, relevant sales research, exploring key areas of concern for sales leaders. Research should be disseminated in respected academic journals, and findings should be shared in more mainstream venues to promote industry awareness.
<b>Student Population</b>	Programs should be available to students of all majors, with encouragement of minor, concentration, certificate, etc. programs within various disciplines throughout the University.
<b>Corporate Relations</b>	Engage corporations for program support with one or more of several methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="444 1335 1049 1377">• Develop a corporate sponsorship program</li><li data-bbox="444 1377 1162 1419">• Host sales-specific recruitment activities for a cost</li><li data-bbox="444 1419 1081 1461">• Invite corporate partners into the classroom</li><li data-bbox="444 1461 886 1503">• Host professional conferences</li><li data-bbox="444 1503 1065 1545">• Provide corporate sales training/consulting</li></ul>
<b>University Recognition</b>	For inclusion in the "Top Universities for Sales Education" ANNUAL magazine listing, the host college/university must recognize the sales program with one or more of the following: Certificate, Concentration, Emphasis, Major, Minor, Specialization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="444 1671 1382 1839">• Exceptions to this rule are only available with extensive documentation from program leaders who track the experience of their students in the sales field, the number of students who take sales courses, the number of sales courses taken by each student, and a set of expectations for the students' sales experience.</li></ul>

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**Internships** Students must be given the opportunity to participate in sales-specific internships, and faculty must encourage internship participation.

- While not all students will take advantage of the experience, all should be informed of the benefits and supported in their decision to explore sales as a career.

**Advisory Board** Engage industry professionals to keep the program relevant, provide exposure, and encourage strategy implementation. Participants should be incorporated into the fundraising and PR efforts of the program.

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### Section III: Curriculum

Colleges and universities are somewhat limited in their resources, both in course offerings and faculty availability, which help determine the possibility of program expansion. However, many institutions currently offer several courses relevant to a sales curriculum.

The traditional course load of university sales programs includes the following three courses: Introduction to Professional Selling, Advanced Professional Selling and Sales Management. In addition, programs may offer several elective and specialized courses to prepare their students, such as Financial Selling. New offerings can include Ethics in Selling, Sales and Social Media and Supply Chain Sales.

By reviewing available course catalogs and current offerings, the Sales Education Foundation will highlight current resources which would be recognized as potential sales program offerings for preparing world class sales candidates. These may include basic sales courses or specialized courses such as Supply Chain Management or Key Account Management.

To launch a program, these initial courses, coupled with a special interest course, would be a reasonable undertaking for a college/university.

For assistance with course review, or for feedback on an outlined program, please contact Sally Stevens, Executive Director, at [sallystevens@salesfoundation.org](mailto:sallystevens@salesfoundation.org).

### Section IV: Available Resources and Potential Partnerships

With the expanded recognition of sales education as a viable and essential offering to most university students, several resources are now available to assist universities in building their initial offerings. SEF can assist these universities with making connections to successful programs.

1. For a comprehensive list of university sales programs, as included in the SEF **Annual** magazine listing of "Top University for Professional Sales Education," visit <https://salesfoundation.org>.

2. Conferences, sales competitions, professional and academic organizations can provide exposure and support to the sales program and its' participants. A listing of Upcoming Events is maintained on the SEF website, visit <https://salesfoundation.org>.
3. Listed below are resources, along with some of the benefits of engagement.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<b>Sales Education Foundation (SEF)</b>	Nonprofit organization dedicated to the support of university sales programs through engagement of academically qualified individuals, industry professionals, and support of university sales program efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor Sales conferences and events</li> <li>• Exposure and recognition through Annual magazine</li> <li>• Grant funding for academic research</li> <li>• Student career development programs</li> </ul>
<b>Sales Educators Academy (SEA)</b>	Conference/workshop for faculty members who teach sales at the university level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with experienced sales faculty, program directors, and industry thought leaders.</li> <li>• Resources to implement into curriculum including video tools</li> <li>• Participation in hands-on workshops</li> </ul>
<b>University Sales Center Alliance (USCA)</b>	Organization of sales academics working at existing sales programs with established sales centers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with select existing university sales program directors</li> <li>• Exposure to successful university sales programs</li> </ul>
<b>Pi Sigma Epsilon (PSE)</b>	Professional fraternity for students interested in sales and marketing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student networking with corporate partners</li> <li>• Student sales competitions and networking events with fellow sales students at other universities</li> <li>• Access to annual student conference/competitions</li> </ul>
<b>National Conference in Sales and Sales Management (NCSM)</b>	Annual conference for faculty members and PhD candidates interested in Sales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with experienced sales faculty and program directors</li> <li>• Exposure to sales academic research and PhD candidate talent</li> <li>• Opportunity for faculty/PhD candidates to present research findings</li> </ul>

## **Sales Competitions and Professional Conferences**

Sales competitions, held both regionally and nationally, are expanding at a rapid pace. Professional conferences provide an opportunity for exchanging ideas and creating valuable connections. For a list of sales-related events, visit the SEF website (<https://salesfoundation.org>) and click on the “Events” tab.

## **Contact SEF**

For a listing of available resources from SEF, feel free to contact us. As part of our overall mission, we will be happy to connect you with current sales program directors and faculty, who are willing to share their experiences. For details on research grants and sales competitions, please visit <https://salesfoundation.org> or call 800-776-4436 for more information.

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### **SEF Contacts**

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