Course: FIN 3450, Computer Applications in Finance

Term: Spring 2007

Teacher: Robert Balik

Two Sections:
- Classroom: Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 pm to 3:15 pm (Room 1135 at beginning of the semester).
- Hybrid Online (hybrid online means there are a few scheduled class meetings). Dates with required attendance for online course (all other course work is done via WebCT Vista):
  - One of the following dates (at the beginning of the term):
    - Tuesday, 1/16/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220 HCOB.
    - Wednesday, 1/17/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1120, HCOB.
    - Thursday, 1/18/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Thursday, 1/18/07, from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Friday, 1/19/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Monday, 1/22/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1120, HCOB.
  - Wednesday, February 21, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in Room 2230, HCOB.
  - Wednesday, March 21, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in Room 2230, HCOB.
  - Wednesday, April 18, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm in Room 2230, HCOB.

Note: When using GoWMU to find information about the online course the Campus Category must be All or WMU Distance Education. In both cases the Subject section should be Finance & Com Law – Finance.


Similarities and differences between the two sections:
- In class version:
  - Students take ETS business exam second week of term – tests students overall business knowledge, about 10% of course grade. This two hour exam is taken outside of regular class hours – the times and places are
    - Tuesday, 1/16/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220 HCOB.
    - Wednesday, 1/17/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1120, HCOB.
    - Thursday, 1/18/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Thursday, 1/18/07, from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Friday, 1/19/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1220, HCOB.
    - Monday, 1/22/07, from 4:00 pm to 6:15 pm in Room 1120, HCOB.
  - Students do 10 projects: 1 Word and Excel project, 1 SAP project, 7 Excel projects and 1 Access project.
  - Students take 10 computer quizzes – on Wednesdays, each is for 70 minutes.
  - Students take two paper and pencil exams on Wednesday, each is for 70 minutes.
  - Students give team presentations.
• Hybrid Online version
  o Students take two hour ETS business exam second week of term – tests students overall business knowledge, about 10% of course grade. Possible dates are mentioned above and are the same dates and times as for the in classroom section.
  o Students do 12 projects: 1 Word and Excel project, 1 SAP project, 9 Excel projects and 1 Access project.
  o Students take 3 computer exams: each is for two hours. The exams take place in the teaching rooms in the computer lab in the HCOB. The specific dates are
    ▪ Wednesday, February 21, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, in Room 2230, HCOB.
    ▪ Wednesday, March 21, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, in Room 2230, HCOB.
    ▪ Wednesday, April 18, 2007, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, in Room 2230, HCOB.
  o No exam during final exam week – all course work is completed the weekend before final exam week.
  o No paper and pencil exams.
  o No team presentations.

In both sections students use WebCt Vista

Two reasons why every business student should take FIN 3450:

November 4, 2005, E-mail message from a former student: I was a student of yours in Fall of 2003. I graduated in Winter 2004 and took a year off before starting my career. I recently moved to Atlanta and began working as an Analyst for one of the largest consulting firms in the nation; Accenture. I am currently staffed at a Cingular Office in the supply chain management department working on the CATS(Cellular Asset Tracking System) IT Infrastructure and Technical Support SLA (Service Level Agreement). My current responsibility regarding this assignment is to collect reports/data for the metrics specified in the SLA and create a mock up dashboard in Excel for all of the related data/reports. In the past few weeks I have been on this assignment, the skills introduced in your class have proved to be invaluable. I have had to convert numerous amounts of data in Excel, create Access queries, and write SQL statements to sort/extract data, and design a multitude of reports that will be used for executive reviews. I kept the textbook and modules from your course and they have definitely come in very handy in these past few weeks. I think a lot of students, including myself a couple of years back, have the misconception that someone is going to hold your hand when you start a new job and that you will be "trained." I remember students in my own class being distraught about having to "teach themselves" how to perform the assignments in your class. The truth is that your method of teaching is merely an introduction to the real world. Expectations are high and it is up to you as an individual to persevere. When your manager asks you to have something done and emailed to him/her by EOB, you better figure out how to perform the task and get it done on time. I never had a clear idea of what type of work I would be doing when I completed my degree, but I don't think I realized the importance of technology in the workforce until I became a true part of it. Technology is huge in every workforce and I feel that students really need to understand that. I may have a degree in finance, but I am further developing my technology skills every day. In a
consulting role projects are always changing; the thing that remains consistent is the demand for technology. I am just at the dawn of my career, but I know in the years to come I will become deeply technical in order to keep my job and stay competitive in the workforce. I want to thank you Dr. Balik, for teaching me some of the most important things I took away from college; not only how to use Excel, but for preparing me to meet the demands of the real world. I hope you can share this note with some of your classes, so your students can hear these words from one of their peers. I am about to turn 23 years old next month and I never thought I'd be where I am now when I was still in college. If any class was important while I was in school, it was definitely computer applications in finance. I find myself convinced that this course should be required for all business majors. It really is that important. Thanks again for everything, and good luck to all of your students.

June 23, 2006, Internship Report: This student took FIN 3450 during the Spring 2006 term and got a Summer internship at Sara Lee headquarters in Chicago. Virtually all the other interns at Sara Lee were graduate students from the University of Chicago. A few remarks from this student's first internship report (this internship included finance credit): “If you know Excel, you'll do fine in the finance world coming out of college.” My supervisor has made that comment multiple times since I started a month ago. At first, I thought he was exaggerating. As the weeks went on, however, I started to see the reason behind his ranting. 90% of my day involves updating workbooks, preparing workbooks for the upcoming fiscal year, and automating many of the processes that are done weekly. Fortunately, I enjoy working on workbooks, or else I would seriously be considering a new career. After completing Finance 3450 this spring, I mistakenly thought I was an Excel expert. It didn’t take long for me to be overwhelmed with the capabilities of that software in a real business setting. Updating workbooks that contain tens of thousands lines of data is not uncommon. At first, it was very intimidating, nevertheless, I have learned to trust the skills I possess and have managed to impress my boss multiple times. One Excel skill that wasn’t touched on in 3450 was the design element. It is very important to anyone looking at a spreadsheet that it be clear and easy to read. This sounded simple and easy at first, however, as the projects and tasks come rolling in, I’m finding it difficult to design and present the information in easy to read and useful tables. Space efficiency on an Excel spreadsheet is also valued. Although some of the workbooks I work on contain 20-30 worksheets, a one or two page summary is all the executives want to see.

Update: Student completed his internship in August 2006 and has been invited back during the December 2006 to January 2007 break. Also, the intern's supervisor said this when writing his evaluation: In my opinion, his Microsoft Excel skills are well ahead of most undergrad students (not to mention many Finance professionals). This skill along with his desire to learn and understand what is driving the business will make him a very valuable employee in the near future.

If you have any additional questions about either section of FIN 3450, Spring 2007, send an email message to Robert Balik, robert.balik@wmich.edu.