

■ Barbara B. Flynn, Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University

In this issue of *Decision Line*, we feature the old and the new. In his President's Letter, Lee Krajewski discusses the changing of the guard as he completes his term as president of the Institute, while we usher in our new feature on Ecommerce, the first of several new features to appear in *Decision Line* over the next few months.

Many exciting changes are underway in the Institute, summarized by Lee Krajewski in his President's letter. Foremost among these is a new information system, designed to better serve the needs of the membership, as well as a new electronic publication devoted to teaching issues. Both strengthen progress towards the Institute's goal of multifunctionality, under the umbrella of decision making.

Lee also summarizes the work that has been undertaken this year by the many hard-working committees of the Decision Sciences Institute.

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utilization, through a better understanding of patient flows through the system. The patient enters the system upon entry into a medical facility or diagnosis with a specific condition and moves through the network until the condition has run its course or the patient exits the health care facility. The nodes represent health care resources, such as beds, examining rooms, physicians, nurses, and medical procedures, while the arcs represent flows between elements. Randomness is included in the model because not all elements apply to every patient and there is some randomness associated with times at each of the elements. Through using a queueing network analogy, health care facilities can augment their understanding of their operations.

Rick Hesse's In the Classroom focuses on the ability of Excel's Solver to do some expanded what-if analysis, helping students to focus on the valu-



Barbara B. Flynn

is a professor of operations management at the Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University. She holds an A.B. in psychology from Ripon College, an M.B.A. from Marquette University and a

D.B.A. in operations management from Indiana University. Professor Flynn has held leadership positions in the Decision Sciences Institute, the Academy of Management and The Institute of Management Science. Her publications have appeared in *Decision Sciences*, *Management Science*, *Journal of Operations Management*, *International Journal of Production Research*, and other journals. Her current research interests include quality, JIT and operations strategy. Professor Flynn's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Center for Innovation Management Studies, the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and the U.S. Department of Education.

Barbara B. Flynn
Babcock Graduate School of Management
Wake Forest University
P.O. Box 7659 Reynolda Station
Winston-Salem, NC 27109-7659
Voice: 336-758-3672
Fax: 336-758-4514
Barb.Flynn@mba.wfu.edu

In this issue we are proud to feature the 1999 Instructional Innovation Competition winner. Harvey J. Brightman and Robert Elrod, both of Georgia State University, discuss the changes they made to their EMBA decision science course that resulted in it evolving from one of the least popular to one of the most popular courses in the program. They moved from the use of a complex simulation game that used outdated technology to a course built upon Herb Simon's problem-solving model. In addition to traditional quantitative tools, they include problem-solving logic and creativity in the intelligence, design, and choice phases of the model. This moved the focus of the course to problem solving, helping the students to diagnose problems and generate creative solutions, rather than simply master quantitative techniques. This is an exciting example of putting the "decision" back into the decision sciences.

In POM Issues, Murray J. Côté of Trinity University proposes a network model of patient flow in medical facilities. Typically associated with queueing applications, this type of model can be used in managing medical facilities to make better decisions regarding resource planning, scheduling and

able information to be gained after the original solution has been developed. He provides a detailed example for demonstrating the power of Solver to go way beyond developing a solution. In the *Decision Sciences Picture Book*, Andrew Vazsonyi presents his analogy that "A Model is Like a Sausage Maker."

In *From the Bookshelf*, Andrew Ruppel focuses on the growth and uses of the Internet. The *Internet Cool Guide* provides a nicely categorized list of interesting and useful sites, plus basic information on the use of the Internet that contains useful nuggets for even the most experienced users. In *Greatest Inventions of the Past 2000 Years*, the Internet was used to collect nominations, in a chat room format. The 100 most interesting are published in this thought-provoking book, which includes inventions of both mental constructs and physical objects. Finally, in *The Nudist on the Late Shift* (how's that for a eye-catching title?), the people that make up the Internet industry are described, including entrepreneurs, IPOers, programmers, newcomers, etc. Through it, we are able to observe the striking rate of change taking place in this industry.

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best practices and in that way showcase e-business success stories in collaboration with industry.

Research in E-business

Research will be an essential function of the Centre for Electronic Business at UPM. The long-term research thrusts are the business, economic, social, cultural, and technological implications of e-business in the emerging knowledge economy. The target audiences are the Malaysian government, community interest groups, and businesses, particularly small businesses and the emerging group of cyberpreneurs. The outputs will be policy and strategy recommendations and new business models for industry.

The Centre is embarking on a major research program on e-commerce to firm-up the Centre's thought leadership in this subject. The overall broad aim of this strategic program of research is:

To understand and assess the full potentials of e-business as a common platform for Malaysian businesses and a springboard for the global marketplace, anticipate their various ramifications, and recommend options for national and organizational strategies and programs for developing core competencies to exploit e-commerce for increasing national competitive edge in the world marketplace.

The research program will focus on the following:

- The measurement of the current status of private and public sectors in Malaysia for e-business;
- An evaluation of the emerging trends in e-commerce practices and policies in the global context and gap analysis for Malaysia vis-à-vis the rest of the world especially EU, USA, ASEAN, Australia, Japan, and Sweden;
- An evaluation of the impacts and implications of e-commerce on the current system of taxation, security, privacy, intellectual property, commercial codes, dispute resolution, communication network infrastructure, payment system, logistical support, content regulation, content industry, and consumer protection. Strategic options and necessary realignments at the national, regional, and international levels are to be recommended;
- Critical appraisal of existing and planned e-commerce projects in the public and private sectors;
- Identifying business areas and niches in which Malaysian companies have natural competitive advantages;
- Potential impacts of e-commerce in critical economic sectors;
- Potential impacts on work culture, processes, and systems at organizational level

and organizational strategies to address them; and

- Identifying critical success factors in e-commerce at the national and sector levels, and the strategies, action plans, and projects to capitalize on strengths and opportunities

The Centre for Electronic Business at UPM will conduct needed empirical research.

As you can see, the general goals for the Centre for Electronic Business at UPM as well as the specific goals in the research center are meaningful and many. It will take a great amount of effort to achieve these goals, but it is critical that we begin now.

If you would like more information, you may email me at hanck@pc.jaring.my, visit the UPM website at <http://www.upm.edu.my>, or write to me at: Dr Chun Kwong Han, Director, Centre for Electronic Business, Malaysian Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. ■

Kenneth E. Kendall
School of Business-Camden
Rutgers University
Camden, NJ 08102
kendallk@crab.rutgers.edu
<http://www.thekendalls.org>

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The Doctoral Students Issues feature describes what was one of my favorite books when I was a doctoral student. Gordon B. Davis of the University of Minnesota describes the new, updated edition of *Writing the Doctoral Dissertation: A Systematic Approach*. This helpful book provides a useful guide to both doctoral students and the professors advising them on applying project management, combined with systems analysis, to the problem of writing a doctoral dissertation. In addition to composite case studies of students who managed their dissertation process poorly or well, it also contains tips for dealing with common prob-

lems encountered by students during the dissertation process and estimators for planning the time involved in dissertation work. The first edition was read by over 50,000 doctoral students and the newly updated edition promises to continue to be a useful guidebook.

I am happy to introduce the new Ecommerce column, which will be a continuing feature. Edited by Ken Kendall of Rutgers University, this column will take a multidisciplinary perspective on some of the research and teaching issues related to Ecommerce that we are faced with every day. He begins with an article by Chun

Kwong Han of the Universis Putra Malaysia, on "Creation of a Centre for Electronic Business at Universiti Putra Malaysia." It describes an industry-government collaboration to promote his country's excellence in e-business and position Malaysia competitively in the emerging knowledge economy. In addition to working with the Malaysian government to promote e-business, this center also provides research opportunities for studying the business, economic, social, cultural and technical implications of e-business.

Watch future issues of *Decision Line*, where we will continue to introduce new features! ■