Corporate Program Case

Kelley School – Indiana University

Argyle Nonno and Ricardo "Rick" Stoikovic are part of the top management team of a top-ranked Mid-West-based business school (the "School"). They are in charge of organizing and managing corporate programs that the School offers to a variety of companies worldwide.

Argyle and Ricardo have felt that there is a need for a new system in which those corporate programs could be managed in a centralized manner. Currently, the information is sparsely distributed across multiple participants, from faculty to staff members. As a result, important components might be found across a variety of spreadsheets and local databases, not allowing Argyle and Ricardo to have a unified view of the programs. This document transcribes the requirements meeting that Argyle and Ricardo had with the three consultants: Diane Scarlet, Maria Olive, and Jeff Navy.

Argyle: It is very nice to have the three of you back for this new project. I have heard that you did a great job in previous projects for our school.

Rick: Indeed. Plus, having former students working on this makes the experience much better, since you are familiar with the School.

Diane: It is always a pleasure to work on the projects that you develop for the school. In a sense, it feels like paying back for the education we received.

Jeff: Exactly! So, how can we help you this time?

Rick: For a long time we have felt that we need a better way of managing our corporate programs. We have multiple partnerships with a variety of Fortune 500 companies to deliver graduate degrees for them but we have not managed these programs in an efficient way.

Argyle: By this Rick means that although these programs are delivered with a high quality level, internally we could do a better job of centralizing the different types of information we have to manage.

Maria: Is that the main focus of this system, centralizing information?

Argyle: I would say that there are two main targets. First, we need to centralize the data about all programs in a single repository. Second, we need to have a better view about what kind of progress that has been made in each program.

Rick: This way we can generate reports and dashboards about where we stand with regards to each program and, in the future, use this information to better manage our internal processes and focus on the things that we can improve in the future.

Jeff: Got it. I definitely think we can help you here. How does the process start? That is, what is the first thing that happens for a program?

Rick: The first thing is to acquire a new client. That is, we need the basic information about the client we are dealing with so that we can organize a program for this client.

Diane: I am assuming that once you have the client you can execute multiple programs for the same client.

Argyle: Absolutely. And we can have multiple cohorts of the same program for the same client.

Jeff: What do you mean?

Argyle: Let's assume that we have a company with which we have a contract…

Maria: Sorry for interrupting but does it mean that the contract is per company and not for program?

Argyle: Good point. We have multiple programs for the same company, with each of these programs requiring their own contract.

Diane: I see. Would you like any help in this part of the process? It seems to be mostly taken care of on a personal basis.

Rick: No, all we need is for the system to store information about the company and the programs designed for that company.

Argyle: You know, Rick, it would be nice to have the actual contract document stored in the system for each program.

Rick: You are right. So, not only the data about each program for a given company should be stored, but you should also store the contract regulating that program as a PDF document.

Jeff: We can certainly do that. But you also mentioned multiple cohorts for the same program. What does it mean?

Argyle: Once the contract is in place for a program, that contract will regulate the creation of cohorts for that program.

Maria: What is a cohort?

Rick: It is essentially a group of employees of that company who take the class together.

Diane: OK. So, would that be a yearly cohort, or does that depend on the contract?

Rick: It depends on the contract. Some programs might run multiple cohorts per year.

Argyle: Also, notice that occasionally there might be some time between creating the program and initiating a new cohort, even the very first cohort for that program.

Rick: Yes. Once the contract is defined we will need to contact department heads who have faculty who could potentially be involved with the program.

Argyle: For example, if we have a program that involves IS content we would contact James in our Decision Technologies and Operations department.

Jeff: I am assuming that some programs involve multiple departments.

Rick: You are right. We will contact as many department heads as necessary for each program.

Argyle: From our perspective, we will ask the DH for resources, one for each course that would be taught by people from his or her department.

Rick: We do not really care how the DH rounds up the people to teach those sections but in the end, after some time, the DH will send us a note with which faculty will be teaching which course.

Maria: But how do you know which courses will belong to which programs? Have we discussed about that?

Argyle: Good point. After the cohort is created, we need to create a set of course sections that will compose that cohort.

Rick: For example, let suppose that we have a program about IS for corporation XYZ. XYZ will have multiple cohorts over the years. Each of these cohorts will be composed of sections of courses, say IS security, SDLC, ERP.

Diane: Are these courses distinct across cohorts?

Argyle: No. They are distinct across programs but always the same for the same program.

Rick. For example, for the IS program for XYZ, we will have a 15-hour IS security course. That same 15-hour security course will be offered in cohort 1, cohort 2, etc.

Jeff: Got it. So the courses will have to be created for a specific program but once they are created they can be reused for each cohort.

Argyle: Exactly. Sometime after they are created, they are staffed with the suggestions obtained from the DH.

Maria: OK, so once the DH replies with the list of faculty for each course, you would allocate that faculty for each course in the system.

Rick: Yes. So, by the end of this process each cohort, which is composed of multiple courses, would have the designated faculty to teach each course.

Diane: Great! Can multiple cohorts be staffed at the same time?

Argyle: Potentially yes, but we would like to treat the staffing process as applying to a single cohort.

Rick: Remember that we really want a more predictable process so we would rather treat the staffing of each cohort as a distinct event.

Jeff: No problem. So, after you have the courses staffed, what would be the next step?

Rick: At this point we have to enroll students into the courses.

Diane: How does it work?

Argyle: The company would send us a list of students for each cohort and we would enroll each student in the first course of the cohort.

Rick: Since those are not degree-granting programs, by enrolling we mean that these students will be allocated to receive instruction in the first course of that cohort, with that course taken in sequence.

Maria: Would you like us to help with the teaching component as well?

Argyle: That would not be necessary. We can use Canvas for the actual teaching part. That is, posting material, communication with students, etc.

Maria: But how does Canvas know which students are taking which course?

Rick: Good question. Once we have the students allocated to a course we will send a list to our internal Canvas management department and they will take it from there.

Argyle: Yes. Every time we have a new course with students enrolled we will send that info to Canvas management.

Jeff: So, what happens by the end of each course?

Rick: Several things. First the faculty communicates to us which students should be excluded from the cohort.

Diane: Does this happen frequently?

Argyle: In rare occasions we have students who completely flunk all the material for a course and they are not allowed to continue. A more regular occurrence is that a student will not be able to continue due to personal reasons and that student will communicate with the company and with the faculty.

Rick: The company will take the appropriate measures on their side but we also need to remove that student from that cohort, even though she or he can return in a future cohort.

Jeff: I see. Anything else happens by the end of each course?

Argyle: Two additional things. First, students are sent an evaluation about the faculty teaching the course.

Rick: Once they reply (and they all reply within one week), we generate a report and a copy of this report is sent to that faculty's DH.

Argyle: Additionally, students will be sent a peer evaluation because all our programs and courses involve some sort of group work and the companies want to know how well things are going in that area.

Rick: So, we capture the replies from the students (who again always reply to the request for peer evaluation). Once all of them have replied we generate a report for that company. If a student has had a poor peer evaluation we also send him or her a message indicating the problem.

Argyle: This is all it takes for things getting back to normal and the students immediately correct his or her behavior.

Diane: So, this process is repeated for each course.

Rick: Yes, those requests are triggered automatically by the beginning of the last week of the course.

Maria: And then the next course starts.

Rick: Exactly.

Jeff: So, what happens when all courses are completed?

Argyle: At that point we will send a confirmation list to the company that the cohort has been completed, with a list of all of that company's employees who finished the program.

Maria: Can multiple courses take place in parallel for a given cohort? Can students take elective classes as part of a cohort?

Argyle: In theory yes for both questions. However, we want you to start with the simplest of the programs, with a sequence of courses that are taken sequentially by the same students (unless a student is dropped).

Diane: Great! We'll start working on this project right away!

Maria: Yes. Thanks for the opportunity to work with the School again.

Note: Model every process you identify in this dialogue except when explicitly mentioned that you should not.