

University to launch 'Business School 2.0'

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Roger Martin, the dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, is not afraid of thinking big.

Two years ago, when the high-priced consultant from U.S.-based Monitor Co. took his current post, he raised eyebrows with his pledge to place the school among the top 10 in the world within a decade.

Less than two years into that task, he is ready for a new challenge — to totally transform business education as we know it.

To help him with the job, he has persuaded Winnipeg-born entrepreneur Marcel Desautels to donate \$10-million from his Canadian Credit Management Foundation (CCMF). Mr. Desautels created the foundation in 1996 after selling his credit rating business, Creditel of Canada Ltd. of Toronto.

It has previously made donations to University of Manitoba, St. Boniface College and the Rotman School, but this is by far Mr. Desautels' largest gift.

"He wanted to do something profound and meaningful that would leave a mark on business education," explains Mr. Martin, who first mapped out his plan to Mr. Desautels over dinner about a year ago.

If what Mr. Martin has in mind pans out, it will stand the traditional business school model on its ear.

"In 1908, Harvard released version 1.0," Mr. Martin says, using a software analogy to describe the creation of the first business school program. "It was a great release and it managed to stay on top for most of the century, but 92 years is too long between releases."

Now, Mr. Martin says he is ready to launch what he calls "Business School 2.0." The business school is holding a reception tonight to announce the donation and Mr. Martin's new vision for business education.

Rotman

As he describes it, his plans will break down the barriers between traditional disciplines and encourage students to confront conflicts between various business models.

Mr. Martin calls this new approach "integrative thinking" and says it will solve the problem that currently exists when newly minted MBAs hit the real world and discover that problems do not fit neatly into pigeonholes.

"Harvard Business School had a challenge when it invented business education," Mr. Martin says. At that time, he says the school's founders made what he calls a "fateful decision" to break business education into functions.

Ever since, students have learned about business by studying cases that focus on a marketing issue or a finance problem, rather than thinking about how various factors throughout the organization affect each other.

Mr. Martin's solution is to create a whole new discipline that looks at business issues in a more holistic way. Part of Mr. Desautels' donation — \$2.5-million plus a matching amount from the university — will be used to establish a new chair in integrative thinking at the business school.

Undaunted by the fact he has created a position in a discipline that until now did not exist, Mr. Martin says he plans to recruit a high-profile academic to fill the post.

To help attract that person, the donation funds also will be used to establish a new scholarly journal on the topic and to fund research and a visiting scholars program. There are plans for a new building, beside Rotman's recently constructed home, to house the CCMF Centre for Integrative Thinking.

"Marcel's gift will be the cornerstone of a new era at Rotman," Mr. Martin says. "From here, I feel that we can now become a differentiated player in the first tier of the industry."