

{Thought in Action} *faculty minds*

Ross Launches Case-Writing Initiative

William Davidson Institute's Globalens Provides Platform for Ross Faculty

The integration of research and teaching in the Ross School classroom received a major boost recently when the school unveiled a formal initiative to write and distribute its own case studies.

The new case-writing operation was launched in cooperation with the William Davidson Institute (WDI). Some 50 cases by Ross faculty are available for purchase online through a partnership with WDI's Globalens platform. Four full-time case writers are working with Ross professors to frame and author two to three new cases each month. About 15 to 20 courses in the curriculum currently utilize Ross cases.

"Ross has a very strong, top-rated faculty that is well-known for its research," says **Robert Kennedy**, WDI executive director and Tom Lantos Professor of Business Administration. "It's exciting to invest in a move that gets those ideas into the classroom in the form of teaching materials. Students walk in, get a case, and see the Ross and WDI logos. Then they see it's written by their professor. It's good for the faculty and good for the students."

THE CATALOG Topics are as diverse and wide-ranging as Ross professors.

Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, assistant professor of management and organizations, has authored material on cross-cultural management. **Michael Jensen**, associate professor of strategy, produced a case on the platform wars in high-definition video. **Ted London**, adjunct assistant professor of business administration, has written a number of cases related to his specialty, the base of the pyramid. London's case on Acumen Fund is a best-seller.

Meanwhile, the emphasis on action-based learning at Ross provides endless fodder for new case study production. **Paul Clyde**, adjunct professor of business economics and public policy, has supervised numerous student projects at Aravind Eye Hospitals over the past decade; a resulting case study on Aravind is now available for use in coursework. Similarly, the Multidisciplinary Action Projects (MAP) course presents a great opportunity for future cases, Kennedy says.

"We get to know certain organizations very well," he says. "And you can start with, 'Here's something I need to teach my students. Is there a MAP project that illustrates that point?'"

ON THE CASE Case writing is unique from a creative and production standpoint. By nature cases are counter-intuitive — puzzles more than stories — and require a unique skill set from the writer. The case-writing team brings varied backgrounds to the table; they are experts in public policy, accounting, science, and organizational studies. **Dean Robert Dolan**, who has a long record of cases to his credit,

GLOBALENS PROVIDES ONLINE RESOURCE FOR BUSINESS EDUCATORS

In early 2007, WDI launched the Educators' Outreach initiative to work with leading thinkers to develop teaching materials on international business topics. Those materials are now available at www.globalens.com, a one-stop shop serving business educators. Content includes international cases authored by Ross faculty and cases submitted by faculty from other global business schools. Globalens features three inter-related components:

- ▶ **CASES:** A searchable catalog offers international business cases, exercises, simulations, and multimedia materials. About 80 titles are now available.
- ▶ **COURSES:** A searchable library of syllabi is ideal for faculty looking to develop international business courses. Some 40 syllabi are available from many different schools.
- ▶ **COMMUNITY:** Message boards provide a valuable interactive space for faculty to discuss international business cases, courses, and teaching issues.

says he is pleased with the progress so far. Action-based learning is the distinguishing feature of the MBA curriculum, he says, but case studies play an important role as well.

"There is no desire to change the culture at Ross, but if we have faculty who are interested in getting cutting-edge ideas into the classroom in case form, we want to make it as easy as possible for them," he says.

The Ross cases list for \$6 apiece, and the growing catalog can be found at www.bus.umich.edu/FacultyResearch/Globalens.

WDI launched Globalens in 2007 as a faculty resource to aggregate cases and other teaching materials — such as class exercises and syllabi — related to international business. (See sidebar.) ✦ — *Deborah Holdship*

