Yes/No/Maybe So Project

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The purpose of this writing is to address the question of what should be done with the thesis capstone project at Kettering University. It will present an argument in support of the keeping the thesis, abolishing the thesis, and proposing a change to the current thesis structure.

**Abolish the Thesis**

The thesis in its current state seems rather unnecessary to prove a student’s worthiness of graduation. A minimum of 161 credit hours is required to graduate from Kettering University for those students that do not pursue a minor or specialization according to Kettering’s undergraduate program (“Academic Programs”). After completing such an in-depth curriculum, it should be evident that the student can piece together different aspects of their education and makes the current state of the thesis redundant after proving their skills in the classroom. As a student nears the end of their undergraduate education, the focus should be on the difficulty of the class work rather than putting together a lengthy thesis project assigned to them by their employer. There are students who put incredible amounts of time and effort into their thesis on top of class work and can use it as leverage in their later professional lives. Meanwhile some students leave it as a final project to complete before graduating, or even worse never complete their thesis and fail to graduate. As an example of someone rushing through their thesis project, take Paul Falchi’s thesis, where the title page has three spelling errors, and only six pages of written content while the rest is images (Falchi). Falchi’s thesis contains so many simple errors that it seems almost impossible that anyone proofread it prior to submission and seems rather unlikely that it was even read before given approval for graduation. This example of a thesis is an outlier, but it shows the lack of care and effort that some students and even faculty put into maintaining a high standard for the projects.

**Maintain the Thesis**

It is a fundamental part of Kettering University to complete a thesis project. According to Robert McMahan, president of Kettering, the University prides itself on being different from other educational facilities, and the requirement of a thesis is just another example of the University’s excellence. While being a nontraditional university, it is important to keep traditions alive within it. Ever since 1945, Kettering University has required a thesis for undergraduate students’ completion (“Kettering University”). It is part of this pride in the history of what sets Kettering ahead of other universities that makes it difficult to part with a piece of tradition. President Robert McMahan says that “alumni of General Motors Institute would recognize the experience of students today” (“Kettering News”). The thesis project acts not only as a way to produce meaningful research experience for the students and faculty, but also continues a connection with a main part of the university’s foundation. Completing the thesis and ringing the sacred gong is a part of Kettering University tradition that all students look forward to, whether it simply means they are done with their degree or viewing it as starting the next chapter of their life after college. Without the thesis project this tradition would lose a large portion of its value representing the completion of a student’s thesis and would likely have to be reformed to be rung by everyone at a time for graduation. Without Kettering University’s style of being different from the rest, it would fall short of providing students with the education that prepares them for the upcoming years of their professional lives, and the thesis is a pivotal part of the transition between educational life and forming a full time professional life. It acts as a final connection from class work to real world applications for the betterment of not only the student, but also supplies the co-op company and university with newfound information.

**New Vision**

Kettering University’s current state of the thesis project works well in theory, but falters in practice. There lacks an intrinsic motivation to completing the thesis aside from simply completing the thesis. Something that could improve the thesis greatly is to restructure it into a scholarship program. With the promise of financial compensation for the time committed to a thesis, it is significantly more likely that students would be more willing to commit additional time to the project according to survey responses from Kettering students. Giving the students a choice to complete a thesis would not only aid in generating more quality content, but possibly even increase enrollment. Perhaps the thesis in this case would serve not only the University and co-op company in producing meaningful research, but also incentivize students to put more thought into the project by directly reimbursing the student for their work. Offering something such as half priced tuition to those who complete a thesis could even convince more potential undergraduate students to consider Kettering University in supplying a much more manageable cost. All parties in this case would benefit due to giving new graduates a much better-balanced start to their professional careers while Kettering University and co-op companies still produce research and new technologies. Of course, it is not as simple as saying just make a thesis optional and give out money to those who complete it, as that would result in most people still completing their thesis and the University losing large sums of money. Perhaps a better solution for all parties involved would be to state whether or not the student plans to complete a thesis as they enter, and tuition can be adjusted as needed until either a thesis is produced or the student graduates. While this would mean that the University makes less money off of each student to complete the offer, the potential uptick in enrollment could likely offset the lowered tuition for the select students.

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