Abstract
In the fall of 2015, the MIS department dropped using a traditional textbook from their introductory MIS course which is part of the core business curriculum and is taken by approximately 2,000 students each academic year. This enabled them to transform their course from a typical commodity course to something new and unique where students develop a deeper and more genuine understanding of a handful of essential topics instead of a superficial understanding of 1,000 topics that they simply memorize, demonstrate their ability to memorize on a multiple choice exam and forget by the time the walk out the door at the final exam. By limiting the amount of time spend on non-value adding content, students learn to think critically about the most important topics. However, there are a number of cons to this approach. Some of these cons are not apparent. In this presentation we will discuss the problems with the status-quo, an alternative and the benefits it can provide as well as some of the issues organizations will face when adopting this approach.

The norm for professors teaching a course in the core of most business programs is to adopt a textbook from one of the major textbook publishers. For every business discipline there is a “course in a box” that meets the vast majority of the needs for an introductory course. This course in a box provides the professor with the ultimate in convenience and efficiency when it comes to preparing for and running a course. Most professors don’t even need to think about the topics that will be covered or a narrative that will weave these topics together. These tasks have been outsourced to the authors and publishers who provide everything from the assigned reading, assignments, professionally developed slide decks, quizzes, and exam questions. These course materials are all conveniently packaged in 14 units that tie to the traditional 14 week semester. This also provides the ultimate in convenience for the student. A student no longer needs to be attentive in class, take notes and learn from the professor. In fact, good students don’t even need to go to class. They can simply read the text the night before an exam and do reasonably well on the classic multiple choice exam that covers dozens of topics at the most superficial level. In some cases good students don’t even have to purchase the textbook but can do reasonably well by simply downloading the class slide decks and study the slide decks the night before the exam. This outsourcing of course content and class materials, often for the convenience of the professor, is not paid for by the professor but by each and every student in the course at the book store at the start of each semester. Not only do student pay far too much for these textbooks which have content that is readily available on the Internet but it also robs the students of a high-quality education. Courses become a complete commodity that cover boatloads of superficial information that can be memorized and regurgitated on a multiple choice exam but create little to no lasting value for students. You can learn a great deal about what is covered in a course and how it is covered by simply asking a colleague “what textbook are you using?” With this mass commoditization of education in business schools, faculty members who teach these core courses using textbooks really need to ask themselves, “what kind of value am I bringing to the classroom?”, “Am I the professor who is educating these students or am I simply a facilitator who is delivering the knowledge of the textbook author?”

In this TREO Talk, the presenters will discuss their experiences with this process, both the expected results and the unexpected results. This will include the pros and cons for this new approach.