



Engaging in Meaningful Project-Based Service Learning for Graduate Business Students

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The Value and Impact of Service Learning in Graduate Business Courses

Benefits to Students

- Increasing business students' awareness of the circumstances and needs of society (Crews, 2002; Berry & Workman, 2007)
- Bridging the gap between “knowing” and “doing” when it comes to connecting theory to practice (O'Brien et al., 2017)
- Improving students' personal insight (Yorio & Ye, 2012) and critical thinking (Seider et al., 2011)

Benefits to the Community

- Helping to stress the rights and responsibilities of social involvement and civic engagement (Fleckenstein, 1997)
- Increasing likelihood of future volunteering involvement (Nicholls & Schimmel, 2012)
- Engaging expertise not currently available or accessible to the community partner

The “WE CARE” Approach

Kenworthy-U’Ren & Peterson (2005)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Welcomed | Faculty are the “first domino” in the line of successful service learning partnerships |
| Evidence-based | We should understand our community partners before engaging them <u>and</u> convey this understanding to our students |
| Complementary | How service learning “fits” into the existing course with adequate opportunity for reflection |
| Action-oriented | Immersing students into a new environment and processing experiences with reflection |
| Reciprocal | Requiring students and community partners to learn from one another as mutual collaborators |
| Epistemic | Creating knowledge in ways that cannot be accomplished through traditional methods |

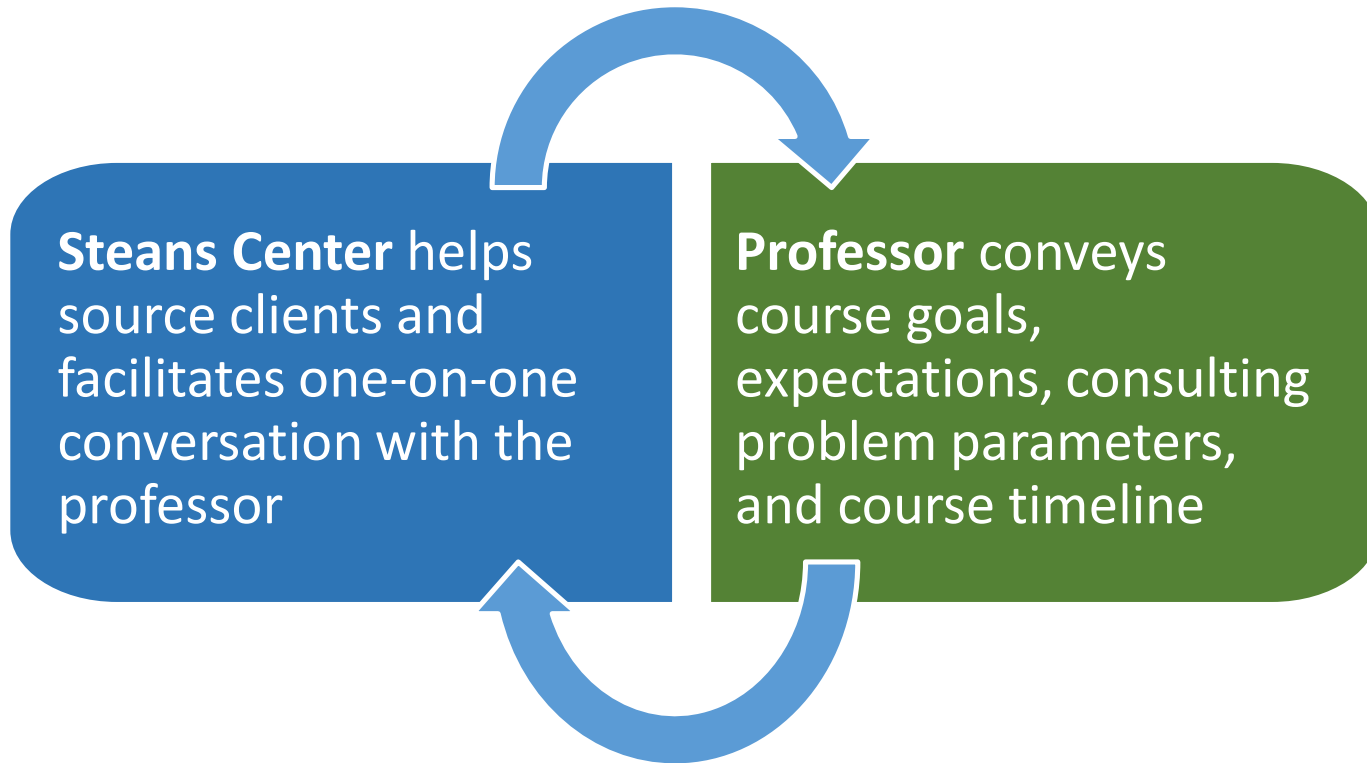
Consulting Skills

- Graduate business students learn the process and skills to engage in organizational consulting
 - Entry & contracting, problem diagnosis, data collection & analysis, feedback & facilitation
 - Human capital issues (i.e., staff/volunteer recruitment, retention, burnout, performance/motivation)
- Students work in consulting teams to diagnose their client's problems and make evidence-based recommendations
 - Goal is to work collaboratively so the client can *own the problem*
 - Clients are ultimately responsible for implementing recommendations

Keys to Success

- Course planning with Steans Center
- Clear expectations and frequent communication with community partners and students
- Ample support for students throughout the process

Course Planning is a Partnership



Service Learning Consulting Project Timeline & Milestones

| Dates | Activities | Milestones/Deliverables |
|------------|--|--|
| 9/17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client organizations to visit DePaul during class Team assignments & client introductions Appoint a primary liaison/client contact and exchange information with client organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team to exchange contact information with each other and client Teams and clients schedule initial meeting date(s) and weekly check-ins |
| 9/17-10/8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams to engage client in initial conversation and proposal development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients to meet with students for initial discussion of problem and planning for further data collection Team to deliver consulting proposal to client by 10/4 Clients and teams to reach agreement on proposal by 10/15 |
| 10/8-11/13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams to engage in diagnosis and discovery related activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients to provide support and access to students for data collection and discovery |
| 11/14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams to develop recommendations and draft report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams to deliver draft report to client no later than 11/14 |
| 11/19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team to deliver team presentation Team to submit final report and feedback deliverables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients to attend team presentations on 11/19 (schedule TBD) Teams to provide final report to client by 11/19 Client returns team evaluation to Dr. Jensen by 11/20 |

Communication with Community Partners

Community Partners commit to the following:

- Providing 2 dedicated points of contact who will be accessible to the students for the duration of the project (9/17-11/19).
- Attending the consulting course at DePaul on 9/17, 6-8pm to present the project to students and meet their assigned Consulting Team.
- A weekly, 30 minute check-in meeting (in person, by phone) with the Consulting Team at a date/time to be agreed upon between you and the team, for the duration of the project (9/17-11/19).
- Providing the Consulting Team with access to staff, volunteers, and clients for interviews, focus groups, surveys, or observation and making all relevant information and data (i.e., financials, budgets, organizational charts) available to the Consulting Team for the duration of the project (9/17-11/19).
- Attending Consulting Team presentations at DePaul on 11/19, 6-9pm.

Support for Students

Acknowledging that projects are ambiguous and that managing ambiguity is hard

Recognizing importance of project management, timelines, and always having a Plan B

Reinforcing professional standards of communication and respect

Giving students “permission” to be direct and clear with clients and knowing when to say “no”

Allowing students to share frustrations as well as stories of success

What do students say?

This was one of the most valuable classes I have had. *Our consulting project was stressful, but I believe it will be very helpful to my career going forward.*

The professor has done a great job of putting *together a curriculum that enables good learning and understanding of the consulting process, and a real-life project that really helps to understand the big picture of how this plays out in a business setting.* You don't get this in most classes.

This class was excellent. *It's a lot of work but you learn a ton and you are able to apply your skills to a real world setting.* I can't say enough positive things.

The *experiential learning in this course is unmatched* by any other course I've taken at DePaul.