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The Ultimate Assessment of Learning, is in Doing: A Business Capstone Experience

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ABSTRACT

The Mission of Molloy College drives its curriculum content, delivery methods, hiring decisions, and student learning outcomes. In alignment with the College's mission, each student graduating from the Business School must be able to demonstrate all that the student has learned throughout his or her journey. The ultimate evidence of learning is in 'the doing.' Over the past few years, the annual meeting of the Northeast Business & Economics Association has become a forum to share and discuss the pedagogical philosophy of the Molloy College Graduate Program. A series of publications has documented the evidence of learning at both the course and program level. Every MBA graduate must demonstrate that he or she can draw from the knowledge, skills, and disposition developed within the graduate program and be able to publicly demonstrate that the learning can be applied in the *real-world*. The mission of the institution establishes the founding belief in social responsibility, service, community, and study. The college's commitment to student learning and academic excellence is demonstrated by the transformative education experienced by the students. The students' evidence of learning must not only solve a real-world business problem, but must also lead to social good.

This proceedings paper reports on the consulting work performed for the not-for-profit organization, *Composite Prototyping Center*. The student consultants, referred to as JHL Consulting, were faced with a significant problem to solve. The story of *Composite Prototyping (CPC)*, and its journey with its Molloy student consultants, is a great story to tell.

Keywords

Composite manufacturing, not-for-profit, social entrepreneurship

I INTRODUCTION

The student-consultants, using the Bloomberg Philanthropies "Mayor's Challenge" business model, developed a three-pronged approach to solve its client's problem: (1) identified a grant for which Composite Prototyping (CPC) meets eligibility requirements. JHL Consulting developed a grant writing guide and sample proposal, including all of the required forms to initiate the grant application process; (2) developed fundraising opportunities that are achievable and will help spread awareness about CPC and its mission, and (3) creation of a "for-profit" subsidiary, which will enable CPC to use its facility for profitable enterprises, that would ultimately fund CPC's mission. This three-prong approach will move CPC into a new phase of success and growth.

2 PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Undergraduate education provides a breadth of knowledge, but graduate education offers depth into the student's chosen profession. The capstone experience is for MBA students who have completed their coursework and are ready to demonstrate to the Molloy College Community – evidence of learning. This evidence extends *beyond* business knowledge and skills, to the students' *disposition* toward social responsibility, community, service, and the role that business plays in our society.

The Molloy Business faculty are committed to, and actively involved in, *influencing* the development of ethical and socially responsible leaders who focus on meaningful management practices, sustainable economic growth, and job-creation. Therefore, the design of the Molloy College graduate program intends to develop future leaders. The leadership focus is not only for the student's chosen profession, but also to fill the dearth of leadership in our country, and in our world. It is our mission to prepare the student to become a participating member of society and a socially responsibility citizen. We hope that the Molloy student recognizes that the collective must serves the needs of the larger society. We believe that this can be accomplished within a capitalistic economy where innovation and hard work is rewarded, but the social focus is a priority.

Civic Engagement was the Molloy College annual theme for the 2012-2013 academic year. This focus inspired the complete overhaul of the business program outcomes for graduate education. The faculty recognized that student learning could be explicitly coupled with social responsibility. This influenced the faculty's effort toward revised student learning objectives. The Consulting Capstone experience provided the opportunity to measure the learning for the business program. By definition, a capstone is that last stone put in place to show the community that the structure is complete and has structural integrity. Simply stated, the consulting capstone course intends to provide the students with the opportunity to demonstrate all that has been learned by working with a business client that serves society.

The 2018 Fall MBA Capstone Classes was divided into four consulting teams under two professors, serving three clients. This paper reports on the work product created by the students under the consulting team name of, "*JHL Consulting*." Each team used the Bloomberg Philanthropies, "Mayor's Challenge" application to guide the consulting process. This process takes the students through four stages: (1) establishing a solution-driven vision, (2) developing a turnkey implementation plan, (3) determining the impact of the plan, and (4) determining if the solution can be replicated.

3 THE CLIENT AND ITS INDUSTRY

The Dean of the School of Business hand selects most of the Capstone clients for the graduate program. To be considered as a client, the organization must have a meaningful social mission and be either a not-for-profit or be a governmental agency. Simply, the client's work must serve the greater good.

Composite Prototyping Center is an advanced materials and manufacturing technology innovation center. The company is a nonprofit with 501(c)3 status, with a mission to "enable all organizations to meet the needs of advanced composite manufacturing by providing access to essential training, workforce development, process technologies, prototype manufacturing and testing capabilities." The organization offers high school introductory-level training courses, in partnership with a local college, with graduates gaining one college credit. CPC also offers a more advanced course for skilled engineering professionals who are continuing their education.

The composite industry in the U.S is relatively anchored. Many firms take the initiative to outsource the production activities abroad in order to realize cost efficiencies. Furthermore, in the last few years, the industry has experienced some disruption due to the lack of raw material supplies and supply chain issues. Nonetheless, experts predicts a bright future for composites manufacturing. In fact, composite production plays a vital role in many industries, including aerospace, construction and military design.

4 THE CONSULTING PROBLEM

The client collaborates with the professor to identify a real-world business problem that its leadership is currently facing. The client understands that the students are 'consultants' and are not interns. The client must also agree to provide institutional knowledge and direction, but then the client steps back to let the 'student-consultants' use their skills and knowledge to study the industry, consider similar industries, and to develop a turn-key plan that will support the client in solving the problem. The leaders and select board members of Composite Prototyping Centre (CPC) identified the following business problem:

CPC is great at the science and the technology. The problem is that the leaders are visionaries, but may not necessarily be business people. The organization's goal to educate Long Island students, veterans, and metalworkers, links directly to CPC's mission and its commitment to Long Island. To live its mission, Composite Prototyping Center (CPC) must be financially stable. The problem is that CPC has not sufficiently developed the needed activities related to both FUNDRAISING and GRANT WRITING.

The student-consultants met with the client's leaders and quickly realized the tremendous value that this organization can bring to Long Island. The consultants, calling themselves *JHL Consulting* set out to build its vision, which would begin the process toward solving the client's problem

5 ESTABLISHING A SOLUTION-DRIVEN VISION

The student-consultants' main focus was to help *Composite Prototyping Center* become financially sustainable, which would allow the organization to fulfill its mission. *JHL Consultants'* vision was to seek a grant related to STEM job creation on Long Island. The team identified a government grant from the National Science Foundation. CPC's facility was operating a three month-long, once-a-week course for high school students in a partnership with a local college. The course cost \$500 per student, with a max capacity of 18 students. CPC was able to break even at nine students. Students from less affluent neighborhoods are often unable to afford the tuition to attend this course, and this is problematic as these are the very students that the organization is seeking to drive economic development on Long Island. With the additional funding from this grant, the students envisioned CPC's growth in its training programs, as well as an increased ability to offer scholarships to underrepresented students interested in STEM education and careers.

The student-consultants' vision related to *fundraising*, also included the creation of a *for-profit subsidiary*. The students established a detailed plan for CPC to create a for-profit subsidiary, which would be owned by CPC. The facility has a large amount of under-utilized space and equipment, therefore a *for-profit* entity would take advantage of this space to create revenue that will fund the nonprofit operations that are currently struggling financially.

The students were also creative by starting the process to register CPC as a beneficiary for the 2019 marathon. The students also designed a 5k race for CPC, which will not only raise awareness about CPC and the organization's noble mission to develop and improve the workforce and the economy of Long Island, but create a revenue stream.

6 MAKING THE VISION A REALITY – A TURNKEY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phase One – Grant Application

Titled "Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science

JHL Consulting identified a grant opportunity that aligned with STEM workforce development and diversity inclusion. The team prepared a preliminary cover letter and grant proposal. In order to be considered for this funding from the National Science Foundation, JHL Consulting demonstrated how Composite Prototyping Center will use funding to offer training opportunities and workforce development for diverse underrepresented individuals. Scholarships for the inclusion of underrepresented learners was a critical aspect of this proposal, as this specific federal grant is aimed toward broadening participation and diversity in STEM workforce and education. The proposal included hiring one full-time individual to implement and create new programming, and to fill the need for ongoing grant seeking and writing for the organization.

Step-by-step plan was provided to the client:

- a) Submit all required forms: SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance, Research & Related Personal Data Forms (2), Budget Information Form, and the Project Site Location Form.
- b) The remaining process required submission of the grant cover letter, project proposal cover page, proposal abstract, statement of need, project description, and finally the goals and objectives of the project. All documents were provided.
- c) JHL Consulting created a username and password for CPC to login to grants.gov. The final steps were identified, such as acquiring a DUNS number and to register with SAM.gov. There was no cost; a step-by-step guide as well as additional resources, was provided to the client.

Phase Two – Fundraising

Designing a 5k Charity Run Race

A detailed timeline and action plan was provided to the client that included:

- a) Date, location, and time
- b) Costs and number of participants
- c) Gifts included a designed CPC printed shirts as part of brand awareness effort
- d) Permission and legal compliance
 - o <http://oysterbaytown.com/applications-permits-licenses-forms/>
 - o Special event application
- e) Building a budget
- f) Sponsorship plans
- g) Event Promotion through social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, active.com)
- h) Recruitment of Volunteers Through Social Media

Establishing CPC as Marathon Beneficiary

NYRR partners with qualified nonprofit organizations to offer entry for runners to the New York City Marathon. Charity Runners raise money for their cause and are thereby given a guaranteed entry into the NYRR events throughout the year to meet their fundraising goals. The NYRR requires runners to raise a minimum of \$2500.

Phase Three – Establishment of a For-Profit Subsidiary

Sometimes it is necessary for a nonprofit to set up a for-profit subsidiary. JHL Consulting recommended this approach to ensure that CPC generates revenues that can feed directly into the nonprofit operations. The main steps were provided:

- a) **Board Approval** - 'Resolution' to own a for-profit. Resolution templates were provided to the client.
- b) **Administration** - To minimize taxes, nonprofits set up the subsidiary as a C-Corp, in which the nonprofit owns some or all of the stock. A nonprofit can also enter a partnership or become an owner of a limited liability company (LLC). The subsidiary pays taxes like any other for-profit, but the parent nonprofit's dividends are tax-free. Using any of these approaches ensures that revenues can feed directly into the nonprofit. Another option is to set up a B-Corp to ensure that the revenues are used to fulfill the company's mission, while also maintaining a for-profit status.

c) **Set Up the Entity**

- File "Articles of Organization" or "Articles of Incorporation" with NY State Department of State
- Secure EIN online from the IRS - <https://sa.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp>

7 DETERMINING THE IMPACT OF THE PLAN

If our proposed measures are successful in creating financial sustainability for Composite Prototyping Center, the organization will be able to expand its outreach to challenging communities on Long Island. With additional funding, CPC can make a significant difference in these communities by providing valuable training to young students. To encourage interest, diversity, and inclusiveness in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics careers and education is of the utmost importance for the United States, at large. Significantly, our proposal aims to help CPC succeed in its core mission: create high-paying jobs to help end the “brain drain,” or mass exit of educated youth from Long Island.

8 DETERMINING IF SOLUTIONS CAN BE REPLICATED

In order to offer credible and sustainable financial solutions for a nonprofit organization, such as Composite Prototype Center, it is vital to highlight organizational successes and lessons from other nonprofit organizations that relied on similar strategies. Federal grants are a huge source of funding for a large variety of nonprofit organizations, including companies, schools and universities, charitable organizations, public housing facilities, research laboratories, and more. Additionally, charitable fundraising running events such as 5k races and marathons present a unique and proven way to raise money and awareness for causes, ranging from chronic diseases to community development. Finally, there are many examples of companies that have successfully set up “for-profit” subsidiaries as a way to help fund operations, linked to the original nonprofit.

The National Science Foundation’s Division of Human Resource Development (HRD) has provided millions of dollars in federal funding to a variety of organizations. These organizations must prove a commitment to enhancing the quality and excellence of STEM education and research, particularly by focusing on diversity and inclusion in STEM participation. Here are just a few examples of organizations that have received HRD funding: American Institutes for Research and Behavioral Sciences, the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, SRI International, Georgia Tech Applied Research Corporation, and many more.

The Epilepsy Foundation, Cancer research Institute and Susan G Komen For the Cure are all part of the most reputable nonprofit organizations across the United States, which successfully used this fundraising medium to its full potential. In fact, according to MarketWatch, an average single charity running event raises over \$50 thousand from sponsors and registration costs. While, in some cases, the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life raised more than \$400 million last year by focusing on this strategy as its primary source of funding.

There are also many examples of for-profit subsidiaries that have been set up by nonprofit organizations as a way to create additional revenues. LesRaine, LLC, a for-profit transportation company, was set up by the nonprofit organization, Our Kids Place. Other organizations have also been successful with this approach. One well-known example is Goodwill Industries International, which provides employment services, job training, and community development, and also operates a chain of profitable second-hand retail stores.

9 CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

If JHL Consultants’ proposed measures are successful in creating financial sustainability for the Composite Prototyping Center, the organization will be able to expand its outreach to challenging communities on Long Island. With additional funding, CPC can make a significant difference in these communities by providing valuable training to young students. To encourage interest, diversity, and inclusiveness in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics careers, is of the utmost importance for the United States, at large. JHL Consultant’s proposal focused on helping CPC succeed in its core mission: creating high-paying jobs to help end the “brain drain,” or mass exit of educated youth from Long Island. JHL Consulting was honored to be able to provide its services to this organization. The students are confident that if CPC follows this plan, the proposed measures will ensure that CPC’s mission for workforce development will become a reality.

The most important outcome of the Capstone Consulting Experience is the development of future leaders who are able to draw upon business skills and knowledge, coupled with a disposition toward Social Responsibility. This is the goal of Molloy College’s Graduate Capstone experience. This proceeding’s paper provides the evidence of learning for these graduate students.

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