

MEMO

Date: July 8, 2014
To: Mark Stewart
From: Amy Kincaid, Writing for Social Entrepreneurship
Professional Writing Program
Subject: Chesapeake Project Course Update

Social entrepreneurs work to solve social and environmental problems using business approaches. Professional writing in social enterprises and socially-responsible businesses can articulate issues, persuade people to join causes, generate resources and support, train and instruct, establish short- and long-term plans, and communicate with internal teams and external stakeholders. My course helps students practice developing workplace documents for social entrepreneurs working in nonprofits and socially-responsible businesses. Students are encouraged to consider designing startups and proposing change initiatives as part of their semester writing projects. The course is experiential and highly interactive, and it emphasizes real-world problem-solving. Students produce four major writing assignment packages (resume/cover letter, planning and progress memo, presentation, and final paper).

Starting Fall 2014, I will integrate and emphasize an underlying theme of sustainability. I have developed a number of new activities, assignments that will encourage students to develop a perspective of sustainability, and I have made instruction notes about incorporating these ideas elsewhere.

Sustainability Learning Objective

Demonstrate ethical consideration of sustainability (vitality of environment, economy, and culture) when developing solutions and effective written communication.

Assessment of Learning Objective

Students' engagement with and familiarity with Social Enterprise and Sustainability Concepts will be reflected in 5% of the semester grade. I will assess written assignments for completion and insight. I will assess class discussions and activity work for engagement and understanding. End-of-semester reflection and evaluation activities will include questions about how students perceive any changes in their own knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors related to sustainability.

Approach

Sustainability will be presented and referenced throughout the course as an underlying theme and assumption: *relevant and effective problem-solving takes into account issues of sustainability*. We will examine problems and proposed solutions through a lens of sustainability that involves three layers: environmental, economic, and cultural.

Examples

A. Introduction and Orientation to the Course —

Among the readings suggested in preparation for the first class meeting:

<http://www.uwosh.edu/sustainability/understanding-sustainability/defining-sustainability>

As part of the orientation to the course, I will mention that the word “sustainability” is used in two different ways in our field. One is to describe continued financial viability of a program or organization. The other is to describe meeting human needs and enabling future needs to be met, and typically is understood to involve conservation or environmental protection and wise resource use.

B. Guest Speakers —

Two of the anticipated four guest social entrepreneurs will represent environmental or conservation efforts. Individuals within my network I am considering to invite: Pete Charlerie (Sunsplash Farm), Gary Skulnik (founder, Clean Currents), Tony Cohen (Menare Foundation), Jim Foster (Anacostia Watershed Society), David Tobin (Equestrian Partners in Conservation), Paulina Migalska (consultant), George Chmael (Council Fire). When speakers are not involved in environment or conservation directly, I will invite them to talk about their work through a sustainability lens.

C. Supporting Assignments and In-Class Activities —

Sustainability themes will be integral to the following assignments and in-class activities:

1. Solving Wicked Problems (#socent problem-solving activity)

Students will be invited to sit near the topic area that speaks most strongly to them.

- o Environment and Climate Change
- o Poverty Alleviation
- o Public Health
- o Arts, Culture and Community Development
- o Peace and Human Rights
- o Education

Student groups will open an envelope associated with the topic area and choose one of the enclosed “wicked problem.” Their first job is to choose quickly which problem to work on. Then they will decide on a type of solution to develop—a solution to some aspect of the problem (or some particular location) that utilizes the students interests and skills. They may choose from one of the following types of solutions:

- A project.
- An organization or business.
- A product.
- A new class, course.
- A policy or campaign.
- A public art project.

Then each group will sketch a solution together, identifying the key elements:

- what could you do?
- who for and with?
- how much might it cost (ballpark)?
- what difference could it make?

Finally each group will identify Pluses, Minuses, and Interestings from each of the following three lenses (and goals): environmental sustainability, economic health, and cultural vitality. The activity will be conducted during Class #1.

2. #socent quick research homework assignment

A quick internet research homework assigned at the end of Class #1 is designed to introduce students to concepts related to social entrepreneurship, and includes Corporate Social Responsibility, Benefit Corporations, and triple bottom line.

3. Call to sustainability readings and lens model

In Class #3, students will be assigned readings from the *Choices for Sustainable Living* study guide's first chapter, Call to Sustainability, by Paul Hawken, Michael Pollan, Colin Beavan, and the good ideas video. As a trickle-in exercise in Class #4, students will reflect on the readings in informal writing.

4. Sustainability lens analysis assignment

Students will be expected to analyze their evolving project/final paper idea through the sustainability lens model in writing for Class #6. They may recall the sustainability lens model presented early in the semester.

5. Community lens mapping small group exercise

Inspired by the suggested group activity on p. 71 of *Choices for Sustainable Living*, students will do a community asset mapping activity in class. Four to five small groups will each focus on a portion of the campus and surrounding area (10-15 minute walking radius from campus). They will create hand-drawn maps noting places, activities, and community assets, and identifying problems and opportunities. Finally, they will brainstorm documents that might be developed to address those problems and opportunities. Materials: enlarged area street map, tracing paper, colored sharpies. Source for background and instructions for asset mapping: KU Community Tool Box. Groups will turn in their maps for grading. This exercise may be conducted, either as an alternative to the Problem-Solving exercise or in Class #7, at roughly mid-semester when students have chosen topics and are planning their approaches to research and writing.

6. Economy (consumption) lens readings and discussion

In Class #8, students will be assigned the following homework readings from *Choices for Sustainable Living*'s chapter on consumption: "The iPhone and Consumer Guilt," "True Price Questions," and "Creating a New Vision of Economic Growth." In discussion during Class #9, students will assess overall effectiveness and analyze the rhetoric (purpose, audience, author; appeal from credibility, logic, and/or emotion), kairos (right timing), and exigence (pain).

D. Semester Project (PPT presentation and final paper) —

Given the underlying theme, some students may choose to develop semester papers focusing on environmental problems or incorporating principles of sustainability.