Senior Research Seminar Strategic Consulting Projects

The Projects
In teams of three, students work with local businesses and non-profits as consultants to create effective strategies. Research-based strategic recommendations are accompanied by implementation plans and methods to assess the effectiveness of the strategy.

Win-Win
At the University of Puget Sound, we try to be responsible members of this community. While the student consulting projects are a learning experience for our seniors in Business and Leadership, we hope to add value to your organization, helping you be more successful. The student reflections from past semesters clearly indicate that helping a real organization become more successful is one of the most rewarding experiences of their college careers. Not only does this benefit your organization, it strengthens the students’ work experience and their confidence. We appreciate your active participation in this project and look forward to assisting you in moving forward.

Student Background
The student consultants are seniors in the School of Business and Leadership. While there are three slightly different majors in the school, all the students have taken courses in accounting, finance, marketing, management, law and ethics, statistics and economics. They have also taken advanced electives in the school; each student will have a deeper knowledge in a specific area of business. The students are not experts in any of the functional areas: The University of Puget Sound is a liberal arts institution, which means that we focus on a broad education that emphasizes critical thinking, research and communication.

Timeline
**Task**
Students receive team assignments.
Students write case about your organization, which includes detailed research and analysis about your internal and external environments. Students lead class discussion. Draft reports written. Prof. Claire provides feedback. Students present recommendations in written and oral forms Feedback to Prof. Claire from you

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<th>Fall Term</th>
<th>Spring Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>first week of Sept</td>
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<td>end of Sept-mid Oct</td>
<td>mid Feb-early Mar</td>
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Confidentiality
Students sign confidentiality agreements regarding their client organizations and all the organizations studied during the term. Strong classroom norms are developed surrounding the importance of ensuring confidentiality. If there are things you share with your team that you are not comfortable having the team share with the larger classroom community, please let them know that.

Assessment
Feedback from you is essential. In addition to listening to your overall assessment of the project, Prof. Claire will ask you to provide a grade. Prof. Claire’s standards are that a B is what is expected of business seniors working on their first consulting project. C’s are appropriate for projects that were not a waste of time but
did not meet your expectations. D’s and F’s are projects that were a waste of time, involved a disrespectful
team of student, or were wildly off base. Prof. Claire needs to know if a project is headed down the D and F
paths (or even C) as strongly worded conversations seem to be quite effective. A’s are reserved for projects
that exceed your expectations—projects you’d be willing to pay for. The grade you assign will become 10%
of the students’ final grade for the project. Your feedback provides input for other portions of the grade as
well.

Getting the Most from your Consulting Team
The following suggestions are based on Prof. Claire’s experience with student consulting projects:

- Although the students work for free, more successful projects result when the clients treat the students
  the same way they would treat paid professionals: Have high expectations and be clear when you are
  not pleased with the direction the work is going. Go over their heads when needed.
- The student consultants work with organizations to create successful strategies. For many businesses,
  this means helping them become more profitable. Not all organizations, however, have the same goals.
  Be clear with your team about how you measure success for your organization and what outcomes you
  wish to achieve.
- Communicate. The students use electronic communication extensively. You may not. Let the students
  know how you prefer to communicate—and how often.
- Communicate in a timely fashion. Please try to call or e-mail the students back within a couple of days.
  If communication has become too frequent or if you feel the requests would be better in written form,
  let them know. You are expected to meet weekly with your team.
- Have one contact person. The teams should have one primary contact person for your project and it is
  best if you provide one primary contact person for the team.
- Share information freely. This includes both information specific to your company and industry
  information.
  - One of the lessons these projects try to teach is that all the disciplines (marketing, accounting, etc.)
    are intertwined. The students cannot create an effective marketing strategy for your organization if
    they do not understand the budgetary constraints. Information you will need to share (if you have
    them) are your business plan, your financial statements for the past three years, product/service
    and marketing information, and growth plans.
  - For many projects, students have no prior knowledge of your industry. Please do not play the what-
    can-you-find game. These projects should be moving your company forward, so share your
    knowledge—particularly of industry organizations and trade magazines that may provide valuable
    data.
- Think about who you would like to be present at the final presentation. Some organizations choose to
  have only the owner/manager present, others include employees, others include investors or other
  stakeholders. It is your choice about who to include. We can provide a meeting space to accommodate
  your presentation or you may have it at another location. In most cases, you will want to allow two
  hours for the presentation so that any questions that arise can be answered.
- Please schedule your final presentation well in advance. At a minimum, we are coordinating the
  schedules of the students (three), Prof. Claire, and at least one person from your organization. The
  students will initiate the conversation, but if you have some dates in mind, it is helpful.
- Let Prof. Lynnette Claire know your concerns along the way (253-879-3576, lclaire@pugetsound.edu).
  Her role is to coach her students and to provide support to the projects. She cannot do this as
  effectively without your feedback.

Being Interested
If you are interested in participating in this project after considering the above information, please contact
Prof. Lynnette Claire (253-879-3576, lclaire@pugetsound.edu). She will meet with you to discuss your goals,
and assess whether those goals are aligned with the course goals and students’ abilities. We strive for a
variety of projects and industries each term. We facilitate strategic consulting projects most terms: fall
(Sept.-early Dec.) and spring (late Jan.-early May).