

HUMAN ISSUES STUDIES PROGRAM
Community-based/Service Learning Course Planning Guide

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Course Number and Title: BUS 498 – Business Strategy (2 sections)

1. Briefly describe your course, highlighting general themes or content areas.

Business Strategy (BUS 498) is the capstone course in the Business program. The focus throughout the course is on strategic management - the process of choosing and defining organizational purposes and objectives, formulating and implementing a viable strategy, and monitoring strategic performance. The purpose of the strategy course is to help students develop an ability to see the enterprise as a whole and to understand how and why the various functions of the business are interdependent and need to be coordinated. Unlike other courses that concentrate on a particular function or piece of the business, Business Strategy cuts across the whole spectrum of business and management – accounting, finance, marketing, production, human resources, and information systems. Students will better understand how various pieces of the business puzzle fit together and why the different parts of a business need to be managed in strategic harmony for the organization to operate in a winning fashion.

2. What are the specific learning objectives for the course, and which of these would be enhanced by a service learning experience?

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. develop and evaluate strategic vision statements, mission statements, and strategic performance objectives.
2. assess a company's industry and competitive environment.
3. identify the basic competitive strategy a company employs and analyze its competitive position vis-à-vis key rivals.
4. explain why a company diversifies, outline the fundamental approaches to diversification, and demonstrate how to evaluate a company's diversification strategy.
5. discuss why a company may opt to expand outside its domestic market and identify options and strategies for competing in the global market.
6. identify major strategic issues a company needs to address and discuss specific recommendations and actions to improve strategy and performance.

Ideally, a service learning experience will allow the students to apply textbook based theories and principles to a real-world setting as they examine, evaluate and develop a business strategy for a local, non-profit organization. Depending on the needs of a particular organization, students should be able to apply to learning objectives #1, 2, 3, and 6 during the service learning experience.

3. What kinds of community-based experiences would allow students to achieve these objectives?

Working with the directors/leaders of non-profit, community organizations in order to develop or revise the organization's strategic plan as explained in items #1 and #2 above.

4. What types of community agencies would provide these experiences for your students?

Any non-profit organization that is interested in writing or revising the organization's strategic plan or parts of the plan.

5. What service would the placements/projects provide to the larger community? What human or community need would be met?

Working with the organization's leaders, a strategic plan can be drafted for the organization. (vision, mission, external and internal analysis, and recommendations). Alternatively, specific aspects of an organization's strategic plan can be studied and revised. Student teams (4 students per team) would work closely with the organization's leaders to develop a project proposal to clearly outline objectives and expectations prior to beginning work on the project. The organization would benefit by having a focused action plan to implement as a result of the strategic plan drafted by the students. The larger community would benefit as the non-profit organization would be better able to serve the needs of the community.

6. How will you structure the service learning experience for your course (optional or required, short-term or long-term, number of hours, equity or balance between service learning and traditional assignments)? If the service learning component is optional for your students, what adjustments will you make to the course's traditional workload (e.g., less reading or fewer problems sets, fewer tests or cases)?

The experience will be a required assignment for all students enrolled in Business Strategy (2 sections, approximately 32 students total). Students would be expected to begin the project no later than the third week of the semester and finish the project by the last week of class (including a final presentation). The project will replace the major project that is currently required (i.e., Company Strategic Analysis) which comprises approximately 20% of the students' grade. Other assignments currently included in the course will also be adjusted in order to supplement the project. Additionally, the new textbook that is being adopted for the course includes fewer pages and two fewer case studies will be assigned. The project will be equivalent to 30 to 35% of the students' grade for the course.

7. What academic questions will you have students consider while they're in the community?
- What is the organization's vision and mission? Evaluate the mission and vision.
 - What is the organization's current strategic and financial objectives?
 - What changes in the macro-environment, non-profit sector, and organization are having a major impact on the organization?
 - Conduct an industry and competitive analysis – What are the dominant economic characteristics? How strong are the competitive forces? What are the driving forces? What are key factors for competitive success?
 - Organizational analysis – What does an analysis of the organization's financial data reveal? What are the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats? How strong is the organization's competitive position? What strategic issues does the organization face?
 - Based on the analysis of the industry and organization, does the organization appear to have a winning strategy?
 - Based on the analysis of the industry and organization, what major issues do you think the organization needs to address?
 - What specific recommendations and actions would you make to the organization's senior management to address each major issue?

8. What strategies will you use to help students integrate their community- and classroom-based work (classroom discussions, integrate into lectures, etc.)?

Classroom discussions will be used to connect theory and principles from the text and lectures to the students' project. Several case studies will be done that focus on strategy for non-profit organizations. Time will also be set aside during class to discuss issues and problems the students have encountered and also to answer questions about specific aspects of the project.

9. How will students be required to demonstrate their learning (journals, focus groups [face-to-face or electronic], presentations, case writing)?

Students will be required to write a strategic plan for the organization in which they are working. In addition, students will make a formal presentation to the class and/or organization regarding their findings and recommended actions. Class discussions will also require students to answer questions and discuss issues that will indicate that they are learning key points for the course. In addition, 2 papers will be required during the semester: 1) project proposal due week 3 or 4, and 2) a project update due week 8.

10. How will you evaluate service learners (percentage of total grade, what will the grade be based on)? What strategies will you implement (e.g., pre- and post-tests, journals, work logs, supervisor reports, project deliverables)?

The project will account for 30 to 35% of the students overall grade for the course. The grade will be based on the final written strategic plan, several shorter papers that students will be required to write during the semester, an evaluation by the organization's contact person, and a final presentation.

11. What other questions remain for you about how to implement service learning?
- How will I best be able to identify organizations that would be interested in participating in the service learning experience? (I will need approximately 8 organizations, i.e., 8 teams of 4 students.)
 - Should students be assigned to a specific organization or allowed to select from among the available organizations?
 - Are the goals and expectations reasonable?
 - What issues have I overlooked in implementing the community-based/service learning component in my course?