Experiential Learning with Capacity Building Management Projects

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ABSTRACT

A capstone course in non-profit community service provides a means for students to gain an enhanced experiential experience using an on-site residency as accredited in-class seat time in a capacity building project. This article will provide the tools, rubrics, assessments, and methodologies used in 96 student projects that culminated in written papers for academic credit that were usable by the community organizations in their work. It reveals the collaborative nature between student, school, and organization in creating usable outcomes that simultaneously builds, experiential learning, and practical management skills and increases non-profit capacity. It demonstrates the "twinning" method of capacity building that is a pertinent partnership model used in the international development, public service, and non-profit sector. Several examples of successful community service projects are shown.

INTRODUCTION

Experiential Learning (EL) has emerged in college education in recent years as a means for students to apply their theoretical and textbook learning into engaging social causes in their neighborhood. Synonymous with community service learning, students gain practical skills while helping community and non-profit organizations accomplish their mission with the additional volunteer labor and skills they bring. Additionally, it helps students to build authentic leadership values that go beyond the competence skills which are often the focus of business programs. The collaborative nature of the work in partnering (twinning) with an organization is an important learning outcome for the process of EL.

This paper presents a capacity building management capstone course as a partnership model for community service engagement and EL that builds authentic leadership aptitude. The course is based on theories of experiential and community service learning, philanthropy, authentic leadership, and twinning. It provides the tools, rubrics, assessments, and methodologies used in 96 student thesis projects at an Eastern United States university with both urban and suburban campuses serving a diverse student group economically, racially, and age. It culminates in a written paper for academic credit that is capacity building for the community partners. It reveals the collaborative nature (or twinning theory) between student, school, and organization in creating usable outcomes that create lasting benefit beyond the student's work. Even though this program is based primarily on graduate school students and collaborative non-profit partners, the principles and methods are applicable and adaptable at the undergraduate level, and have been incorporated in first and second year students in urban colleges in New York City being especially effective in interdisciplinary research methods and business courses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The capacity building capstone projects are based on a theoretical stream of experiential and community service learning, philanthropy, authentic leadership, and twinning. They are outlined below and integrated into the flow.

EXPERIENTIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING AND PHILANTHROPY

Experiential learning (EL) is an excellent way for students to not only engage in a social cause while learning their professional business management skills, but also to feel that their education has a level of authenticity that is not translatable in the classroom. It increases personal transformation, self improvement, student accountability with others and professor (Breunig, 2011). Attempting to measure growth in transformation in EL is a difficult task, but is possible with a continuum style model that articulates the 'naturally occurring' activity that takes place in the student as they interact with missions and philanthropic contexts. One must move from being punitive to transformative seeing the life change that comes from outside effectual change through experiential learning rather that winning on tests and exams in the classroom (Ewert, & Sibthorp, 2009; Qualters, 2010). EL with community service organizations provides a means for students to be able to become deeply engaged and involved with people in need, organizations who are meeting those needs, and providing direct services to people in the community. It moves the learning process from technique to deep involvement and influences from the lives of others in the process (experiential education), not just the on-site learning of techniques (Roberts, 2012).

Community organizations that are involved in the values of experiential learning (Roberts, 2012) are founded on a philosophy of philanthropy, the loving or doing good for humans. This is similar to service learning (Adams, 1979; Dillon, 2012).

Barbara Valocore (2013), in her work on the spiritual philanthropy perspectives of community, states that loving people is what is different in the world, and spreading service and kindness to others is a contrast to the "rather greedy grabbing" that takes place in consumer society. Service to a community is a way to bridge kindness with organizations. Education that is immersed in philanthropic effort will return to students value beyond the techniques wherein personal benefit is overshadowed by a benevolence commitment to others (Morvaridi, 2012). One element, as it is directly applied in the capstone course is in being benevolent with giving time where student who engages in service learning will gain more out of their education than if they simply were to sit in the seat in a classroom (Prince and File, 1994). Indeed, it could be said that working together in community service in experiential learning not only adds a sense of fulfillment and authenticity to one's work but also social capital including being market savvy to the social cause business context (Miller, 2010). In sum, the student involved in EL partnered with a cause-related non-profit site will not only learn from the experience, but be changed themselves to be less self-oriented and more caring and philanthropic in their own lives.

What will motivate the student in EL to be more philanthropic, and not simply take the techniques learned away from the course and count them as professional competencies? Deci (1971, cited by Theuvsen, 2004) make the point that people are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic behaviors, where intrinsically motivated behavior is defined by actual hands-on activities as takes place in EL. However, as much as people may be motivated by an internal driving force that makes them want to engage in EL (such as get academic credit), extrinsic motivation-the positive input that comes from working with others-is "a major force in individual behavior" (p. 123). In other words, students working with others rather than in the crucible of the study hall alone by themselves is a purposeful method to create authentic and virtuous character. In light of this combination of both internal and external forces motivating a student towards engaging a community and their own learning from the positive venue that EL provides, Bright (2005) would make the point that character is ultimately the most powerful result from this collective action.

Authentic leadership is an exceptional method to frame EL as more than just technical work, as one gets deeply involved in the lives of those in the community who need help. The willingness to engage and improve the lives of others (or the organizations they cater to) builds personal character and exposes personal vulnerability that could otherwise not be accomplished in a classroom (Breunig, 2011). As one gives of themselves it broadens their self-oriented individualistic worldview, into a caring attitude for others increasing one's philanthropic mindset into mission and causes (George, 2003).

What does all this have to say about authentic leadership development through EL as students engage capacity building with community and non-profit groups? Field (2008) describes that authentic leader that is effective "is one who brings out the best in the organization's people in terms of their aspirations, potential, performance and contribution" (p.25) and is not self-interested in arrogant aggrandizement. Leadership is a reflection of good virtues, beliefs, and character (Allendar, 2006). George (2003) makes a case for CEOs to become more authentic caring individuals who understand their purpose, practice solid values, lead with their heart, establish connected relationships, and demonstrate self-discipline in all of this work. The cause is at the forefront of what leadership mission is so there is a wonderful alignment between authentic leadership that fits within the frameworks of George's model of authentic leadership, and what is trying to be accomplished through EL. Effective leaders are mission driven based on causes and values they believe in and will sacrifice in their work. Authentic leadership is vulnerable leadership where there is a recognition that one has their own foibles and weaknesses that can be exposed in the professional environment. A powerful role of EL is to provide students with opportunities to work through these issues while invested in very real word needs based cause-driven projects. In the end, George (2003) asks what leadership faithfulness and ethics truly are and what type of legacy one is to leave in the world. Legacy that is not self-aggrandizing is a core of authentic leadership. This is ethical leadership in EL students are put into positions where they are to lead from the heart in vulnerable situations with hurting people making it an ideal venue for teaching and learning authentic leadership (George, 2003).

CAPACITY BUILDING

The Capstone Course requires students to improve the work of the organization they are partnered with, increasing the capacity of the organization to accomplish the mission and serve the clients. Capacity building is a trend that has been active in global international development and non-profit work for over forty years (DAC, 2006). The National Council of Non-Profits (2017) defines it as

an investment in the effectiveness and future sustainability of a nonprofit… (doing) whatever is needed to bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission into the future.

Connelly and York (2003) elucidate that there are four types of capacity building actions in a non-profit organization: adaptive capacity, leadership capacity, management capacity, and technical capacity. Adaptive capacity is concerned with strategic planning, assessment, and evaluation. Leadership capacity engages board development and the executive team. Management capacity frames how an organization recruits its people, volunteers, and the human resources functions related to it. Technical capacity focuses on elements of executing the mission of the organization such as finance, marketing, legal, and direct services. McNamara, C. (2017) purports that primary methods for capacity building activities are to assist businesses and non-profits with organizational resources (assisting in areas where there are loopholes or understaffing), readiness (preparing for future and visionary growth), life-cycle (maintaining the current structures to ensure ongoing effectiveness), trainings/consultants/peer networks (building relationships through education and collaboration with others). The Capstone Projects, overall, cover most of these types of capacity in some form. (see Appendix 7)

Twinning is a method of capacity building in collaborative partnership that emerged out of the post-war era where the government had to "twin" with local towns and municipalities to rebuild and to create economic development through a symbiotic process. Today, this is often viewed in terms of partnership. The current mode of federal and state governments partnering with local direct service providers is an outcome of this method. Ouchi (2004) shows how "twinning" is a method of capacity building wherein world bank investment in development project combines with a local country or community to achieve the desired results. Similarly, the principle of twinning in capacity building in local projects is the method of outside entities coming alongside an organization to partner for effective change (Jones, 2010). The collaboration of a university or college with a local non-profit business to build a symbiotic result through internships or capstone projects fits this method. The twinning theory is the foundation of the experiential learning projects described in this paper.

The goal with capacity-building projects is to give a young startup businesses or non-profit organization a project to improve their capability in achieving their long term strategic mission. It is not a short-term fix for immediate crisis interventions, short-staffing, or menial jobs to be done with volunteer or cheap labor, unlike many college internships where the job position is a fix for a particular role, such as covering the duties of employees on vacation, cleaning the office, or doing data entry. The projects noted in this paper are built on the premise of a short-term investment into a long-term benefit for the business, non-profit, or community organization.

Capacity building takes many forms. For instance, the New York City Council provides capacity building non-renewable grants through the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund for minority based non-profits that successfully propose an improvement project in board development, administration, fundraising, assessment, or strategic planning (CCNSF, 2017). New York University Wagner Graduate School of Public Affairs invites public good organizations to apply for faculty led student teams to prepare and work on an enhancement strategy that can document lasting value for the business or non-profit (NYU, 2017). The Queens Economic Development Corporation provides funds for Entrepreneur Space, a capacity building community kitchen for food startup businesses that combines actual kitchen space with training in marketing, financial planning, and food division regulations in business, all the different stages in pioneering a business (QEDC, 2017).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Experiential Learning Capacity Building Capstone Course is designed to help students integrate knowledge, skills and experiential learning from all other courses in the management curriculum. It consists of a combination of interactive and independent learning experiences designed to facilitate mastery of the issues, methods and skills required in professional management. Students participate in interactive cases and simulations during executive seminar lectures and workshops which focus on best practices in research and consulting for non-profit organizations. Coinciding with this training, each student develops an original project through which demonstrates mastery in business management by applying knowledge, current practices and techniques, utilizing appropriate professional attitudes and values, and employing effective communication skills required in business, management, and non-profit work. It is an integrated fusing of experiential learning, capacity building professional competency application, and culminating thesis for graduation.

The course evolved out of a non-profit management program with a number of specific eight week courses that taught various competencies such as finance, marketing, strategic planning, and fundraising. There was a need for a course that would blend all these individual competencies into an executive director type environment and present it over a longer period of time. Further, whereas the individual courses were critical in building the plethora of skills necessary for success in the non-profit sector, there was no course that forced the students to engage a topic over a much longer period of time to process the program more fully the individual skills being learned. Thus, the Capstone Course was developed to fulfill this dual purpose.

The public service-based academic department uses the Capstone Project as an assessment mechanism for the training and competency expectations of a graduate thesis. The Capstone serves as the ongoing project that students work on throughout their various residencies and courses, providing a consistent evaluative means to track progress in the program. The following areas are tested through the culminating project: professional writing skills, research proficiency, integration of course learning theories into defined project, ability to link theory with practice in a defined project, partnership consulting work with a non-profit organization, and project execution from proposal to completion.

The ancillary benefits the students receive are numerous. They are able to assimilate the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession in a direct fashion as the textbook comes alive in real world experiences. The twinning process deliberately and intentionally links the students from campus to community and back to campus. There is application learning in different organizational settings of material that is common to all students in the core curriculum so students are able to compare the similarities and differences in how the class material are used at the street level basis. It establishes preferred problem solving approaches to identifying needs, assessing related conditions and constructing appropriate solutions for business and non-profit organizations. Students are able to demonstrate professional competency in communicating, especially in presentation skills, evaluation and feedback.

A key training mechanism in the capstone project is the use of Bellman's (2002) consultant's training methodologies with the students. In the capstone projects students take on the twinning posture of a professional consultant in relationship to the nonprofit organization, while being supported by the professional faculty. Key elements of this training are for students to understand their unique capabilities within the nonprofit marketplace, alongside their career aspirations and specializations that they

want to pursue in their professional careers. As Bellman (2002) states in his work, one of the strong elements of the capstone project are students being able to review what they are learning on the nonprofit sites while receiving confirmation about what they are learning from their supervisors and collaborators and clients on a nonprofit site. This allows them to "match uniqueness and readiness" (Bellman, 2002, p. 75) and define the boundaries of the work that they do. So, in the end, once the capstone is completed and the final paper thesis is produced students can feel confident that they have a specialization in the nonprofit field that they can market on their resume.

The student works an average of 10 to 20 hours a week onsite at an approved business or non-profit organization, as cited in a time log, in the development and creation of a project demonstrating mastery, ideally with a nonprofit organization other than their own. These hours are used to set up the project, complete research, participant observation, and volunteering with the cause as needed. Once the onsite work of 12 to 16 months on site, the students spend up to 6 months analyzing the data, integrating the data with literature appropriate to their field of research, and build a series of capacity building results and findings that will help the non-profit organization far beyond the completion of the thesis.

The course is designed to be a catalyst for critical discussions of presenting learned materials which would result in constructive improvements of the organizations in which the students has served. The presumption is that students will learn professional presentation skills from one another, experience presenting materials in a large group setting, learn critical techniques for giving and receiving constructive feedback, and compare their various experiences, all while providing a very tangible benefit to the non-profit organization. Indeed, the ultimate goal is that the capstones enable the receiving community sites to gain lasting benefits through a completed thesis. Thus, the practical application of the thesis into the non-profit sector continues to be the most difficult rubric for students to pass as the adjudication committees, consisting of both educators and practitioners, hold this outcome in the highest regard.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS AND INDICATORS

The primary faculty of the program have identified the following student learning goals of an effective nonprofit leader emerging from the academic program. By the end of the capstone course, the student will demonstrate the following skills.

1. Skilled Management
   Goal 1: Our graduates demonstrate management skills for leadership.
   Indicators: Communicates clearly by receiving and providing feedback. Presents persuasively and professionally. Manages effectively within the nonprofit sector. Develops, implements and evaluates necessary programs. Resolves and heals through conflict management.

2. Strategic Management
   Goal 2: Our graduates think and act strategically in their role as nonprofit leaders.
   Indicators: Networks across sectors. Plans and delivers on organizational objectives and outcomes. Casts organizational vision and inspires commitment to the vision. Aligns organizational culture with organizational mission. Stays current with relevant public policy issues and engages advocacy as appropriate. Utilizes the best knowledge and current practices from the nonprofit world. Takes initiative with courage. Embraces change. Advances everyone's career.

3. Spirited Management
   Goal 3: Our graduates engage leadership with commitment and enthusiasm.
   Indicators: Pursues and models life-long learning. Cultivates openness, joy and enthusiasm in the work environment. Builds a culture of teamwork. Aims for excellence. Breeds equality and compassion into professional interactions.

4. Savvy Management
   Goal 4: Our graduates possess a knowledge base appropriate for the nonprofit sector.
   Indicators: Stays abreast of nonprofit laws and regulations and integrates them into professional practice. Comprehends and connects theory with practice. Identifies, obtains and effectively uses resources. Conveys literacy and competency in nonprofit issues. Thinks critically.

SITE SELECTION
(SEE APPENDIX 1)

The first stage of the process following the initial capstone residency workshop is the selection of a potential site where students will work. The student meets with a potential site supervisor and discusses the possibility for a capstone project. It is made clear there must be a tangible and quantifiable outcome that will benefit the nonprofit organization, not just a project to benefit the student and the university. Successful nonprofit EL sites work in a collaborative partnership with the university and the student who serves as a consultant posture to the nonprofit site. Thus, the process of capacity building "twinning" is put firmly in place. Professional faculty from the university hold both the student and the site supervisor accountable to ensure there is compliance to the project according to the student learning outcomes and objectives. In other words, supervising sites cannot just randomly decide what they want to do and go ahead and do it and slot a student into a predetermined job, but must form a higher level capacity based

project that moves beyond just part-time volunteer service for the nonprofit. This is very different than the way many nonprofits view community service learning on their sites where often interns and college students are viewed as cheap help that must fit into what is already going on. In this case, it is very much a professional consultant style relationship aimed at capacity building.

There are three primary selection types of EL sites: 1. Organizations where the student currently works as long as the assignment is outside of their normal job duties. 2. Organizations that the student approaches that align with their career interests 3. Organizations determined by the program director from within their range of pre-approved sites. The student meets with a potential site supervisor and completes a capstone contract that is submitted to the program director for ratification and approval. Some students are interested in their own start-up non-profit using this project as the basis for an entrepreneurial business plan. They are to find a similar organization(s), volunteer there for a minimum of 20 hours, and use the additional 20 hours for more in-depth research on the start-up phase, with a draft business plan completed.

CAPSTONE PROPOSAL
(APPENDIX 2)

Due following completion of the course where the initial plan was written, students create a formal proposal. Following the first few capstone workshop residencies, students edit, adapt, change, shift, and reengineer their capstone proposal according to their needs. This may take up to three months as the relationship is built with the collaboration between the college and non-profit site. Once the proposal is officially approved, the final capstone proposal is due for completion following the meeting with the Capstone Thesis Chair, and Capstone Site Supervisor. The capstone proposal must align with one of the core course competencies in the nonprofit program such as strategic management, public policy, research, fundraising, human resources, or ethics (See sample projects Appendix 6).

CAPSTONE THESIS CHAIR REPORTS
(APPENDIX 3)

Once the proposal is approved, each student will be assigned a Capstone Thesis Chair whose responsibility it is to hold the student accountable towards completion of their project and ensuring academic rigor is upheld. There are to be three formal meetings preferably face-to-face, but if that is not possible can be completed by Skype, Adobe Connect, Facetime, phone, or other electronic face-to-face method. A back and forth email conversation does not suffice to meet this requirement. The capstone thesis chair is to complete three reports to track the progress of the student. Initial Report: Completed immediately after the initial meeting with Thesis Chair, Midpoint Report: Completed about the midway point in the program (Philanthropy course), Final Report: Completed about a month prior to formal presentation of Capstone after the Capstone Thesis Chair has met to make final revisions with the student and prepare them for committee. Students are additionally required to attend two professional conferences related to their work in the non-profit sector. It must have an educational component. Students are encouraged to attend conferences where they can professional present their work and receive critique and feedback.

The student will implement the project as outlined in the Project Proposal. Since this is a supervised project; students will work closely with the program director of the nonprofit program, the Capstone Professor and Capstone Thesis Chair assigned to guiding the student toward a successful project.

STUDENT TIME LOG
(APPENDIX 5)

Students keep a log of their time at their subject organization. This log will include the date and times on site and a general description of the activity for that period. This log will be turned in with the Progress Reports. The time log may include hours spent on either the Project Proposal and/or the Project, and may include (but not be limited to) learning about the culture and mission of the organization, identifying current issues and actions in the organization, and collecting data for a project. Students are required to spend a minimum of 8 hours preparation of the proposal, 40 hours formal research time (interviews, ethnographic observation, surveys, focus groups, board meetings) based on their hypothesis. Additionally, students volunteer many hours (on average 10 – 20 hours per week) at the agency working in the programs doing things such as food distribution, tutoring, garden planting, staff meetings, fundraising events, and shadowing the Executive Director in the daily work. This would take place over a period of two years.

CAPSTONE THESIS PAPER

The students complete a seminal paper for the project that must be comprehensive in character and contain the core elements of advanced academic writing skills according to APA standards, theoretical foundation based on experiential learning in the program, literature review from management literature and outside sources (journals, articles, books) that are relevant to the Capstone Project, research methodology, and practical application as a capacity building outcome. Capstone thesis projects are in the neighborhood of 50 – 75 pages including references and appendices. Following completion of the paper, the student presents and defends their Capstone Thesis before an adjudication committee consisting of various faculty and professionals (usually about 4 – 6

members). The presentation of 7 – 10 minutes must be professional and academic in nature and include a defined power point presentation in academic format to support the core elements of the presentation. The presentation will essentially provide an overview of the core components of the Capstone Thesis project.

Students receive a grading from the committee on each category with Pass with Distinction (PD): The student clearly worked with distinction in all aspects of his or her project. Pass (P): the student's participation and level of work meets minimum expectations for achievement in her or his field of work. Fail (F): student did not meet requirements for one or more aspects of the capstone program. Students who grade with a high number of PD will be asked to provide a poster session for conference or other professional presentations to provide additional resume or CV accomplishments. Students are graded in a PD, P, or F based on the following criteria when combined with the paper presentation that is simultaneously given to each member of the committee: Academic Writing Skills, Presentation (verbal presentation and answering of questions), Theoretical foundation and Praxis, Research Methodology, Practical Application in Capacity Building.

RESULTS

Using this twinning capacity building method model, 96 successful capstone projects were completed with most still continuing to benefit the organizations in which the students served. The increased experiential learning of the student is a long-term university benefit as it increased post-graduation employability. The community organizations partnered with the university are motivated to engage repetitive projects or ongoing strategies. There are consistent requests by previous beneficiary organizations to have another capstone project so on a subjective level it seems there is an ongoing desire in beneficiary nonprofit sites to continue to receive students on an ongoing basis though the continuation of the projects may suffer the constraints of reduced university funding and faculty staffing.

As noted above, Capstone Projects are graded by an objective adjudication committee consisting of faculty with no previous knowledge of the student's work. This is to gauge the level to which students have gained core competencies (student learning objectives) required for success as leaders in the non-profit sector, particularly as executive directors.

N=96 projects

Category (Student Learning Objective with Bloom's Taxonomy)	PD	P	F
Standard: academic writing skills (Remembering, Understanding)	14.57%	58.85%	3.20%
Standard: presentation (Remembering, Understanding)	17.13%	58.67%	6.12%
Standard: theoretical analyses and praxis (Applying, Analyzing)	7.16%	61.35%	12.69%
Standard: research methodology (Analyzing, Evaluating)	9.50%	56.50%	14.41%
Standard: practical application into the nonprofit sector (Applying, Evaluating, Creating)	8.68%	55.80%	15.91%

Key: PD (pass with distinction), P (Pass), F (F)

The evaluation shows that overall the core competencies are met by about 85% of the students falling into a Pass With Distinction or Pass category. However, 15.91% of students were weak in the practical application into non-profit sector service. The program does well to forge a real world work identity, but does not fully translate into students being able to articulate how to apply that experience. Experiential Learning in community service (or service learning) is useful in helping 64.48% of students to link the Capstone Project to actual application.

The types of final projects range from policy manuals, to strategic plans, to marketing and fundraising initiatives, to direct services, to start up plans; all outcomes that align well with standard practice in capacity building. They represent a broad plethora of organizations with most being regional or micro organizations in community development, advocacy, education, healthcare, theater, sports and nutrition, and youth services. The students through these projects have enabled the university to gain a legitimate and measurable community benefit that enhances the reputation of the university and provide positive promotional stories for marketing and enrollment which are used in university publications. The following case studies are typical examples of successful capstone projects.

CASE STUDY RESULTS

Roadmap to Recovery

This project was designed to assist the Center For Public Justice (CPJ), a public policy organization, increase its donor base and revenue. CPJ experienced a significant decline in its donor base from a high of 1000 donors in 2004 to less than 300 donors. After a thorough SWOT analysis of the organization and its marketing and fundraising practices, the project pursued donor development and cultivation strategies. Important components of the project included board member education and involvement in the fundraising process and the pursuit of diverse sources of revenue. Both quantitative and qualitative surveys were utilized for data collection and constituent feedback on initiatives. The 16-month project produced a significant improvement in revenue, modest gains in donor contributions, and a significant increase in the number of major donors.

This project incorporated a mixed-methodology of test survey, phone interviews, electronic surveys, social media test, staff interviews, and a SWOT analysis. The test survey was limited to two donors, one lapsed and the other current, and was instrumental in developing the phone interviews. Although a larger donor sample was requested for the test survey, CPJ's financial crisis and other priorities prevented acquisition of the larger sample. The survey was conducted over the phone and used 13 primarily open questions including four questions designed to gather demographic information. The test survey was completed in July 2011.

The questions were primarily open to elicit discussion with a few designed to gather demographic information such as age, profession and race. The response from the pool of 100 constituents produced 14 respondents—11 responded by telephone and 3 chose to respond in writing. The electronic survey comprised 25 predominantly closed-ended questions designed to produce important demographic information and constituent preferences. All of the survey respondents subscribed to the Capital Commentary, CPJ's weekly opinion publication on current policy issues. Of CPJ's 2,162 constituents in their Constant Contact database, 477 opened the email, 215 responded via Constant Contact and 13 printed out the survey and responded by mail. The allotted time for responding to the survey was between February and March. The survey was vetted for two weeks before finalizing.

Clearly, compared to the previous four years of operations, it was an overwhelming triumph, producing the highest amount of revenue, and the highest-level net revenue gain of $237,000 and without any liabilities on the balance sheet. A large amount of that gain is attributable to the increased number of revenue streams, specifically dinners, honorariums, grants, and board member underwritten projects. Expenses, reduced by 15 percent, were the lowest compared to the last four years. Yet, CPJ moved to Washington, DC increased. (Hughes, 2011)

Compassion Corps

Over the past 6 and-a-half years, Compassion Corps (CC) has achieved some success in alleviating suffering and advancing economic development in northern Africa. Noteworthy accomplishments include African field partnership formation in seven countries, with mobilization of over 26 U.S. short-term field service teams. While the number of participants and recipient programs has rapidly increased, two great needs are apparent: steady sources of staffing and equally steady sources of funding. With only two paid staff members, volunteers have played a major role, but this reality brings limitations and challenges. Better-trained and committed volunteers are necessary, out of which paid staff can be recruited for effective accomplishment of the mission. Meanwhile, with CC's funding base derived solely from donations, the organization has been unable to hire sufficient personnel, to cover desired program costs, and to commit to adequate funding of partner programs.

The purpose of this capstone project was to address these two strategic issues; that of quality human resource development and sufficient, diversified sources of funding. During a period of 21 months, analysis has been done of various components of the nonprofit, resulting in a strategic plan with specified courses of action, both in the area of human resources (HR) and development. The HR plan includes creation of an educational arm, which, besides helping to grow well-prepared social and missional entrepreneurs, will also generate sustainable monthly income for the parent organization. The prioritized financial development issues look at generating sustained funding sources through a more strategic annual fundraising event and creation of social enterprise projects, such as processing and marketing coffee, to benefit indigenous partners as well as CC. While comprehensive in scope, an effort to strategically address both issues has already begun and will continue to result in significant strengthening and impact of the organization.

Lessons learned from this capstone project are as follows. For the strategic plan to succeed in a micro non-profit organization such as this on must build it large enough & strong enough coalition to adopt & support the plan and review strategic plan at least quarterly with staff. This will foster effective decision making & implementation, and maintain an ongoing cycle of action research where the strategic plan is consistently revisited and adapted as necessary. (Bean, 2013).

Women's Mission (Pseudonym)

The following case demonstrates the effective practical results that are gained from the Capstone Thesis project that not only provides an experiential learning activity for the student but also builds capacity and long-term benefits for a business or community organization.

The Women's Mission (WM; pseudonym) is a private, non-profit organization that holds a 501(c) (3) tax exempt status with a mission to serve as a semi domestic violence and sexual assault service center. Prior to the Capstone Project they had been experiencing significant budget cuts and reduction and attrition of staff, resulting in reducing the hours of direct service to those in need. This created a problem with the state accreditation authorities that the community organization was not fulfilling its mandate and mission, placing re-accreditation in peril.

The Board of Directors charged the Executive Director to rectify this non-compliance with the state requirements. A committee was formed to address the issue through strategic planning and under the direction of the Executive Director the Capstone Project student was initiated to monitor the process and report the results. Several stakeholders were interviewed or surveyed as to their view of the work of WM such as human services agencies, hospital, police, and counseling groups. The committee then reviewed the WM's mission in advocacy. The Capstone consulting student assisted the committee in undergoing a SWOT analysis to learn the degree to which WM was complying with its mission while conforming to its strategic plan. The findings were presented to the Board of Directors for approval and implementation.

An adjustment plan was approved wherein a restructuring and hiring process to rectify the direct service compliance was undertaken while in constant communication with the state agencies and board of accreditation. The finalized plan that emerged out of the Capstone Project was brought to the management team, where it received the team's approval. The plan and budget were then brought before the Board of Directors where it was unanimously approved. None of this would have been possible without the direct work of the Capstone Thesis student worker using experiential learning in a real-world exercise in management work. Further, this case study demonstrates that the model of a longer-term 2 to 3 year experiential learning engagement enables the community organization to partner with the university over a longer period of time, invest more significantly in providing on-site experience for a student over a longer period of time than the typical internship of a semester or two, and engage projects that are capacity building and help in the longer term after the student has completed the Capstone. (Faramelli, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how a capacity building capstone project is an effective application of experiential learning as a methodology for integrating classroom education theory practice and authentic learning in the business and nonprofit sector. Through the use of a structured and defined course that culminates with a thesis, this demonstrates how one does not need to only sit within the confines of the classroom to learn, but in getting gritty at the grassroots level of people in need it forces upon the student an exposing of their own vulnerability as a leader and professional. Residency time served in the service of others offers an important and valuable learning experience with several teachable moments as the student interacts with those who are served. This is an excellent lesson to learn that is highly motivational yet introspective in its effects on the life of the student. This extrinsic and intrinsic perspective is highly valuable for students to learn early in their careers.

The capstone project also unearths a powerful means for colleges to connect with communities in need through the "twinning" process of capacity building not only through short-term engagements, but through long-term projects that leave lasting impact on the community organizations long after the student has left. Whether there is a robust continued connection with these college and community collaborations after the projects are completed, cannot be shown at this point. Informal feedback from service sites that have had students in the past does seem to at least on a subjective level indicate that impacts carry on beyond the completion of these projects. Other colleges that choose to create a formal capstone process that functions over a 2 to 3 year period would be well advised to simultaneously create a monitoring system for ongoing evaluation. Further research and application of this method into undergraduate environments, will help EL professionals and faculty to further bridge their relationship partnerships and collaborations in making sustainable and lasting change for people in need.

Finally, it remains to be seen to what level the capstone projects embed themselves in the community organizations over the long term as this project has limitations in that there is no ongoing program evaluation or monitoring of the completed capstone projects at the service sites. It would be apropos to create some sort of mechanism to continue to track over the long term whether these projects do leave lasting effects or if they are simply two-year projects. Ongoing research is necessary to understand this lack of clarity about whether these types of projects actually have quantifiable and measurable impacts that continue to benefit the business and non-profit sites following the conclusion and culmination of the project.

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Appendix 1: Site Contract

Capstone Project Site Application

Name of Business or Organization:
Name of chief executive:
Name of primary contact person:
Contact information:
- E-mail:
- Office phone:
- Cell phone:
- Address:
- City/State/ZIP:

How is the business organized?

Year Founded:

Has the contact person read the Capstone Project description and agrees with the purpose and nature of the Capstone program?

Please describe the possible Capstone Project(s) that may serve your business or organization:
(Use additional paper if necessary. This description and contact information may appear as an alert to students of a possible capstone project opportunity.)

Signature of Contact: _____ **Date:** _____

Submit application to: _____

Appendix 2: Proposal

The Project Proposal
Capstone Thesis Proposal must include the following:

1. Hypothesis and Research Question (what are you trying to do)

2. Methodology (site, research times, research method, analysis method)

3. Literature Review (a sample of articles that will guide your literature review, and will help to unpack theories you use for analyzing your data)

4. Timeline (sketch out how you plan to complete the project in time to present on the Thursday prior to your final residency).

5. Specific Information

   a. Name of site supervisor and contact information.

   b. Field of Study in Business Management based on coursework.

   c. Your contact information

   d. Have you completed the official Capstone Application form and sent it in to the Program Director?

Appendix 3: Capstone Chair Thesis Form

This agreement will serve as the official contract between _____University and_____for the role as a Capstone Thesis Chair to_____, a student in the _____program for the Capstone Course.

1. As a Thesis Chair, I agree to evaluate the project proposal as an expert in the field, while considering the components outlined in the Capstone Rubric document.
2. As Thesis Chair, I will meet with the student a minimum of three times to assess the progress of the Capstone Project and to complete the reporting sheets. This is preferred as face-to-face, but may also be completed by Skype, Adobe Connect, phone, or other virtual communication. Simple emails back and forth will not suffice or these meetings, though other emails will be common. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate these meetings.
3. As Thesis Chair, I agree to advise the student on the specific citations and their utility to the project, as outlined by the components in the Capstone Rubric Document Notes.
4. As Thesis Chair, I agree to evaluate the evidence of the work accomplished as demonstrated through the completion of an Initial Report, Midway Report, and Final Report. The evaluation criterion is outlined in the Capstone Rubric Document and Student Assessment Document.
5. As Thesis Chair, I am asked to attend the presentations of the student with which I have worked. This is to be supportive of the student. I will participate in the adjudication of other student presentation as a part of the Capstone Assessment Committee.
6. As Thesis Chair, I understand that I am responsible for providing graduate level feedback onto the project document and return it to the student well in advance of the final presentation (8 to 10 weeks is appropriate), but no later than the end of the term in which the student presents the project.
7. As Thesis Chair, I will submit the completion report sheets to the Capstone Faculty Leader upon follow the three required meetings.
8. As Content Expert, I understand that I will be compensated $____, for each student that I serve in this capacity.

By signing this document, I confirm that I have read each statement and I am in full agreement with my contractual obligations.

_____(Signature)　　　　　_____(Print name)

_____(Date)　　　　　　　_____(College ID #)

CAPSTONE INITIAL EVALUATION

Name of Student:
Cohort #:　　　　　　　　Date:
Name of Project:
Project progress or achievements:
Briefly describe the project progress to date:
Obstacles or challenges:
Next step(s) for my project:
I have contacted a Content Consultant:　(name)
No----____　Not yet, but probably will shortly _____
B. Project Chair Evaluation
Student has communicated pertinent information to effectively get tracking on the project:
Yes ____　No ____　Comment:
My thoughts about student's project:
In general, student is on track and performing satisfactorily:
Yes with distinction____　Yes ____　No ____
Capstone Thesis Chair NAME: ____　　　　Signature: ____　　　　Date:

CAPSTONE MIDPOINT EVALUATION

Name of Student:
Cohort #:   Date:
Name of Project:
Project progress or achievements:
Briefly describe the project progress to date:
Obstacles or challenges:
Next step(s) for my project:
I have contacted a Content Consultant: (name)
No----_____   Not yet, but probably will shortly _____
B. Project Chair Evaluation
Student has communicated pertinent information to effectively get tracking on the project:
Yes _____   No _____ Comment:
My thoughts about student's project:
In general, student is on track and performing satisfactorily:
Yes with distinction_____   Yes _____   No _____
Capstone Thesis Chair NAME: _____   Signature: _____   Date:

CAPSTONE FINAL APPROVAL EVALUATION

Name of Student:
Cohort #:   Date:
Name of Project:
Does the project meet the criteria necessary by including the elements of the Capstone Rubric?

Standard: academic writing skills
Standard: presentation
Standard: theoretical analyses and praxis
Standard: research methodology
Standard: experiential learning in the business field

Capstone Thesis Chair NAME:_____

Signature: _____   Date:_____

APPENDIX 4: TIMELINE

NPM Capstone Project Flow

APPENDIX 5: STUDENT TIME LOG

Complete the Time Log including the following categories: (1) program confirmation, (2) formal meetings, (3) research, (4) onsite ethnography, (5) volunteer service. Have your site supervisor or Capstone Chair sign and approve. Students are expected to complete 10 to 20 hours of project time throughout the program.

Student Name _____

Name of Project _____

Location _____

Date	Activity	Category #	# of hours

Authorization and Approval Signatures:

_____ (Capstone Chair) _____(Date)

_____ (Site Supervisor) _____ (Date)

APPENDIX 6: SAMPLE LISTING OF COMPLETED PROJECTS

Title of Project	Field of Experiential Learning and Capacity Building
Strategic Board Development Plan	Governance
Fiscal Policy of B.C.M.	Finance
Combining Nutrition, Sports, and Community Initiative to Combat Childhood Obesity	Public Policy
Standards of Excellence: Certification Process and Donor Funding	Issues and Ethics
Building philanthropy through graduate student programming: A fundraising educational plan.	Philanthropy
Bridge of Hope International: Bridging the Gap	Human Resources
Establishing a Young Professionals Network	Strategic Planning
Aquaponics: information and teaching booklet	Public Policy
Rebuilding the Board of Hunting Park United	Legal and Governance
Rotoplast Marketing Mix	Marketing
Program Evaluation: Bigs and Littles Training	Research and Evaluation