MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

EDUCATION TO COMMUNITY (E2C) PROJECT

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

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It is not uncommon for many nonprofits to be so focused on their mission that internal organizational challenges are sidelined. For students in the Graziadio School’s Master of Science in Management and Leadership program, this can present a unique opportunity to contribute to a worthy cause while putting their knowledge and skills to work.

As a culminating workshop of the 16-month program, Graziadio School students are required to complete an Education to Community (E2C) Capstone Project pairing student teams with community-based organizations. “The capstone project is designed to give Graziadio students the chance to apply what they have learned throughout the program to a real-world situation,” said Professor Mark Allen who teaches the capstone Leadership Through Systems course. “We select nonprofit consulting assignments because this program focuses on organizational issues. Plus, the idea of working with community-based nonprofit organizations aligns well with the university’s motto: ‘Freely ye received, freely give.’”

As the Executive Director I get pulled in many directions. Staying focused on the right things can be difficult; however this project has been helpful in redirecting the agency in meeting our goals. The final project exceeded my expectations and I know this will give us a competitive edge over other small nonprofits.”

Gloria J. Davis Executive Director, Girls Club of Los Angeles

“It was a great way to really have the opportunity to apply and re-visit all of the concepts that we had learned in the program. It showed me that I could take the lessons learned in the program and apply them to real-world problems.”

Adriana Robles Master of Science in Management and Leadership, 2011 and Graziadio School student consultant for THINK Together

“The Education to Community project is designed to give M.S. in Management and Leadership students the chance to apply what they have learned throughout the program to a real-world situation. They can observe first-hand the challenges nonprofit organizations face while applying their previous learnings with a high-level, pro bono consulting assignment.”

Mark Allen, Ph.D. Practitioner Faculty, Organizational Theory and Management

What is the E2C Capstone Project?
The Education to Community (E2C) Capstone Project gives Graziadio School students a unique learning experience to share the knowledge and skills they have developed in the M.S. in Management and Leadership program with nonprofit and community-based organizations.

How Does the E2C Capstone Project Work?
The E2C Capstone Project pairs student teams with nonprofit and community-based organizations to help identify and resolve a wide range of organizational and management issues. Each team presents recommendations to its client, gaining valuable real-world consulting experience while providing much-needed services to worthy organizations.

Capstone Project Highlights
Classes that have completed the capstone project volunteered with a diverse mix of clients, including:

impossible2Possible
Students provided strategies and tools to increase awareness of and engage volunteers in a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young people through global expeditions.

THINK Together
A team of Graziadio School students counseled this provider of extended learning programs for youth on the training and development of staff and volunteers.

Working Wardrobes
For an organization which helps men, women and young adults enter the workforce, Graziadio School students delivered a plan for staff and volunteer excellence.

Aquarium of the Pacific
Graziadio School students assisted a cultural landmark in diversifying its customer base.

Families Forward
An organization providing homeless prevention services which experienced increased need for its services worked with a Graziadio School student team on improving the experience for volunteers.

Girls Club of LA
Graziadio School students addressed employee satisfaction and recognition at a local nonprofit agency providing services for underprivileged and at-risk children, youth and their families.

Glendale Healthy Kids
A Graziadio School student team counseled a health care agency serving underinsured children on how to vet, cross-train, recognize and reward volunteers.
Dreaming the Impossible

In 2007, adventurer and long-distance runner Ray Zahab made history by running from one end of the Sahara Desert to the other – some 4,500 miles. His feat not only raised awareness of the scarcity of clean water, it also caught the attention of Bob Cox, an athlete in his own right who combined forces with Zahab to launch impossible2Possible (i2P). The organization sponsors youth expeditions in environmentally and socially sensitive areas to both educate and inspire positive change.

“Starting your own company, you’re busy 24/7,” said Cox, who now serves as i2P executive director. “What the Graziadio team provided was invaluable to me, freeing me up to spend more time in growing the organization.”

Graziadio students consulted with Cox on processes to connect the fledgling organization’s team of volunteers. The Graziadio team had a few organizational challenges of its own, including team member Jason Quinter’s field assignments as a U.S. Marine. However, using the skills and insights honed in the program, they were not only able to work effectively as a team, they in turn shared with Cox insights on how to strengthen the organization.

Solving Problems Together

THINK Together, a nonprofit with a staff of 2,000 and a team of volunteers in the hundreds, serves 75,000 at-risk and low-income students at 250 sites across California. The organization faced challenges with systemized training and smooth employee turnover. That’s where the Graziadio School consultant team of Adriana Robles, Laura Douk, and Susan Plank stepped in to help.

Robles, Douk and Plank developed a systematic approach that was designed to mimic the MSML program. In a module format, the women broke down THINK’s structure into “six thinking hats” that consisted of specific objectives: teaching, helping, inspiring, nurturing, focus on kids, and togetherness. They developed a leadership guide that would provide a formal and methodical management protocol for the organization.

Impressed with the group’s independent incentives, CynDee Zandes, chief program officer for THINK Together, said of the experience, “I was a receiver and a responder; not a driver. They absolutely acted as consultants.” Zandes also praised the group and the program for the invigorating energy it brought to the organization’s management philosophies.
A Working Partnership

"The name of the game in nonprofit is partnership," said Working Wardrobes’ founder Jerri Rosen, who worked closely with the Graziadio School consulting team of Amy Wilson, Jason Shroot and Mihai Tiplea. The team spent six months working closely with the Orange County-based organization, which empowers men, women and young adults to confidently enter the workforce.

In addition to providing “gently worn” wardrobe services, the organization coaches more than 5,000 clients yearly in career development. Working Wardrobes services people from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, including men and women participating in the Welfare to Work program, recovering alcoholics and substance abusers, victims of domestic violence, people experiencing transitional homelessness, and other life crises. The organization has helped 50,000 men and women reenter the workforce over the last 20 years.

Wilson, Shroot and Tiplea’s consultation began with some nonprofit-friendly suggestions for rewarding staff and volunteer excellence, including public praise, appreciation awards, and a one-on-one lunch with Rosen.

The group also recommended the implementation of a training program for staff and volunteers called the Leadership Institute. The intention is to promote career and leadership development of the volunteer network, grow the network of volunteers, and to better retain those volunteers.

Learn More

More than 90 percent of nonprofits are small or midsize, with budgets under $1 million according to the Council of Nonprofits. The economic downturn has increased the need for nonprofit services, while decreasing contributions. Programs like E2C help fill a void.

The E2C program also provides students in the Master of Science in Management and Leadership (MSML) program with the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills they have developed by working directly with the leadership of organizations to resolve issues and identify opportunities. The 16-month part-time MSML program is designed to help you bring forth your true inner leader. You will build the knowledge and confidence to advance to a higher managerial level, all within a values-centered learning environment that focuses on your personal and professional development.

For more information regarding the MSML and E2C programs, please visit: bschool.pepperdine.edu/msml or call 888.339.0109

Jason Shroot; Jerri Rosen, CEO and founder of Working Wardrobes; Mihai Tiplea; and Amy Wilson (left to right)