Service Learning Project Opportunity
Simmons School of Management at Simmons College
GSM 526 – Market Research for Strategic Growth (MBA 2 Credit Elective)

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Introduction:

The Simmons School of Management is designed to educate women for power and principled leadership. We were the first, and are one of the only, MBA programs designed specifically for women. We have been nationally recognized for our innovative work to integrate social and environmental issues into our core management curriculum by the Aspen Institute. At thirty-one, the average age of Simmons MBA students is slightly older than most MBA programs, and our students bring an average of eight years work experience, and a good level of confidence and maturity.

As part of a new MBA “service learning” elective, Market Research for Strategic Growth, small teams of Simmons MBA students will be available to work on faculty-supervised market analysis/market research projects.

Community Partner Eligibility:

As a “service learning” course, projects will be conducted for social ventures. Eligible social ventures can be incorporated as a non-profit, for-profit, or hybrid organization, but must have a prominent social mission. We are especially interested in, but not limited to, ventures which are using, or partially using market-based mechanisms (i.e. through the sale of products or services) to achieve the social mission.

This highly applied class is designed to help MBA students expand their knowledge of market research and analysis approaches, and to apply those skills in the context of a major research project for a social venture. Students will have already taken MBA level Marketing Management and Quantitative Analysis (statistics), as well as the first of the two required Strategy courses. To help apply these skills, the focus of this course will be on market research projects related to strategic growth. This might include expansion through a new program, service, or product area, expansion into a new geographic market, or a new customer segment.

The scope of the projects can encompass a variety of market research methodologies and techniques including analysis of secondary market data, and/or the collection and analysis of primary data through surveys, focus groups, expert interviews, or netnography. All projects will culminate in a detailed summary of the findings and managerial recommendations related to strategic growth.
The Service Learning Project:

The course will run from June 3-July 29, 2009. All projects must be completed by July 29. Each project will be assigned a team of up to 6 MBA students, who will collectively dedicate approximately 350-400 woman-hours to their project.

This program is firmly built on the principle of mutual benefit. Community partners receive MBA-level market-research consulting services to further develop and expand their organizations. In return, students have the opportunity to apply their skills to a real-world project related to strategic growth and learn from the founders and leaders of social ventures.

Students will be supervised by Fiona Wilson, the Simmons faculty member running the course, which will include upfront work on project design and project management, as-needed guidance on research methodologies, and feedback on analysis and recommendation development. Prior to joining the faculty of Simmons, Fiona spent 15 years leading the strategic marketing and marketing research efforts for major global companies, entrepreneurial ventures, and non-profit organizations.

The student teams and projects will also be supported by the Scott/Ross Center for Community Service at Simmons College, which facilitates community service opportunities for the entire Simmons community, including service learning, community service work-study, and volunteer experiences. The SRC oversees more than 45 programs and initiatives that connect Simmons with the community through reciprocal partnerships. Carolyn Grimes, Program Director Graduate Community Engagement and Service Learning will assist Fiona Wilson, and serve as a resource to the community partners.

For this first year, a maximum of 4 projects from community partners will be selected by the faculty member leading the course. Selection will be made no later than April 15, 2009 and will be based on fit with the course design and objectives. Students will be assigned to teams by the faculty member to ensure teams that are well balanced in terms of skills and experience levels, but students will be able to indicate their preferences for specific projects based on their personal and professional interests.

Expectations

The 4 community partners whose projects are selected for 2009 will be expected to:

- Attend the pre-course kick-off class at Simmons SOM, on Wednesday, May 6, 6-9pm. Participating organizations will be required to make an approximately 30 minute presentation of their organization and the intended project (to include Q&A) to the students
- Be available in the first 2 weeks of June for an initial project meeting with your assigned team (approximately 2-3 hours depending on the nature of the project, ideally in person, can be at your site.) Partners will be expected to share all background and briefing materials at this time
☐ Identify a main contact person within their organization who can be “reasonably” available for the students on an ongoing basis for any needed clarifications and project check-ins
☐ Attend the final course presentations at Simmons SOM on Wednesday, July 29, 6-9pm
☐ Complete evaluations of their project team and the deliverables no later than Wednesday, August 5
☐ Reimburse students for any reasonable associated out-of-pocket expenses. (It is anticipated that projects will be low cost/no projects projects. For example, students have access to Zoomerang for online surveys, and have access to all necessary standard statistical and presentation software through Simmons. Any anticipated out-of-pocket expenses such as costs of mailings, support for focus groups etc will be presented to the community partner for approval at the outset of the project.)

Participating student teams will be expected to:

☐ Identify one liaison to serve as the main contact for the organization (although all students in the group will be expected to participate in briefing meetings, project check-ins and final presentations)
☐ Develop a “project agreement” in consultation with the faculty member and the community partner to outline specific agreements on scope, deliverables and timelines
☐ Provide regular updates to the community partner throughout the 8 weeks of the project, and while being respectful of the partner’s time, seek clarification as needed
☐ Develop a presentation with a summary of findings and recommendations for presentation to the community partner on Wednesday, July 29, 2009
☐ Develop a supporting report with detailed findings and recommendations by Wednesday, July 29, 2009
Contact Information

Name of Organization: ________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

Primary Contact Person: ________________________________

E-mail Address: ________________________________________

Phone Number: ________________________________

Best Time and Method to Reach You: _______________________

Secondary Contact Person: ________________________________

E-mail Address: ________________________________, Phone Number __________________

Project Information

Please address the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

I. Briefly state your organization’s mission.

II. Describe the market research/analysis project that you are interested in having our students address. Please be as specific as possible.

III. What goals do you hope to accomplish through this project?

IV. How does this project fit with the future strategic goals and objectives of your organization?

V. What resources/capacity to implement the project recommendations does your organization have?

Questions? Please contact Fiona Wilson, Instructor, Simmons School of Management, 617-521-3315 or fiona.wilson@simmons.edu

Please return completed project proposals to Carolyn Grimes, Director of Graduate Service Programs, Scott/Ross Center for Community Service, 300 the Fenway, Boston, MA 02115 or grimesc@simmons.edu no later than April 1, 2009.

Thank you! We look forward to working with you!