MBA Sustainability: Specifications for Live Consulting Engagements with Corporate Partners

What are the goals for this MBA program?

The MBA Sustainability program focuses on developing the knowledge, capacities, and skills to lead private, public, or not-for-profit organizations towards economic, ecological, and social sustainability.

To prepare students for management careers, we offer a rigorous, internationally-accredited curriculum that integrates coursework in all essential business disciplines with practical application of cutting-edge models to solve real-world problems. Active learning consulting engagements are complemented by international travel and professional skill coaching. Program graduates understand how varied business functions interrelate and contribute to sustainability; they have proven analytical and communication skills for solving complex problems, improving processes, inspiring innovation, and leading change.

What can MBA students do for you?

Under the guidance of our faculty and your project manager, a team of MBA students can research, analyze and develop an action plan to solve problems or capitalize on opportunities. While the students gain valuable hands-on experience and managerial insight, your organization will benefit from:

- Fresh viewpoints and creativity using IDEO Design Thinking and other proven methodologies
- Research via world-class e-resources and academic journals
- Application of the latest theories, tools and models with guidance from our faculty
- Exposure to analytical and communication best practices for a digital, global economy
- Insight for using new media forms, including electronic social networks

What are the project selection criteria?

Well-conceived problems/opportunities that align with SMART objectives:

- **Specific**: tangible, clearly defined objectives, scope, scale and deliverables
- **Measurable**: action-oriented outcomes with quantifiable returns
- **Achievable**: feasible for a team of 4-5 MBA students
- **Realistic**: expectations based on access to resources and information
- **Timely**: 8-14 week timelines

What types of projects are most suitable?

- Developing new business models to support product innovation, technological change, life cycle analysis, carbon footprint assessment, triple or integrated bottom line reporting, etc.
- Leveraging sustainability for innovation, growth and value creation
- Analyzing organizational challenges related to social, environmental and financial resources
- Improving processes, inspiring innovation and transforming leadership practices via an analysis of primary/secondary research, internal and external benchmarks, and profit/risk projections.
- Engaging employees, customers or other stakeholders and motivating behavioral change

January 2014
Guidelines for Student Consulting Engagements

1. Sponsoring organization (client) provides written objectives, expectations and deadlines.
   a. Arranges for students to have access to information, resources and personnel required to deliver project on time.
   b. Assigns internal manager who will meet with students and answer their questions on a timely basis.

2. Duquesne professors oversee the student work and compliance and coordinate interfaces with the client team.
   a. Kick-off meeting: client defines goals, scope and deliverables
   b. Work plan: students recommend approach and timetable
   c. Mid-project review: students and partner review progress versus agreed to scope, milestones and metrics
   d. Final presentation: students present research, analysis and recommendations

3. Both client and Duquesne recognize that the project is a learning activity which carries risk for all participating parties. Students are not to be viewed as professional consultants or advisors, but their contributions and insight should be welcomed and respected.

4. Students and professors sign non-disclosure agreements for proprietary information, if required.
   a. Sponsoring organization is encouraged to camouflage highly sensitive data.
   b. Written approval of organization is required by both parties prior to publication of any learning or insight from the project.
Project Focus Possibilities

**Fall Project: Sustainability Audit/Opportunity Assessment** (October to early-December)

- Students benchmark an organization’s competiveness on social and environmental responsibility versus competitors/industry by conducting an independent analysis of web sites, industry reports, financial indices, media reports and literature.
- Students examine opportunities to improve supply chain efficiency and effectiveness through reverse logistics, closed loop manufacturing, energy conservation, recycling, carbon footprint management, waste reduction, packaging changes, integrated reporting, etc.

**Winter Project: Sustainability Process Improvement** (January to late April)

- Students develop and analyze a survey to assess understanding of and attitudes toward sustainability at functional levels in an overall organization or supply chain.
- Students interview organization’s leaders and employees to identify opportunities to improve management of social, environmental, physical, informational or financial capital.
- Students develop a balanced scorecard for identifying and evaluating sustainability initiatives based on research of metrics and best practices in an industry.
- Students do legwork for an organization that seeks the Malcolm Baldrige award, ISO 14000 or 9000 certification, LEED certification, an industry leading initiative, etc.
- Students document an as is model for a process, preparing time and motion studies, process flow charts, etc., and participate in information gathering, analysis and design of a measure to improve efficiency or reduce carbon footprint.

**Summer Practicum: Strategic Innovation Proposal and Change Management Plan** (late May to July)

*Note: Requires students to conduct interviews, collect data and actively interface at client site*

- Students develop a marketing plan for a new product or service, applying best practices for ethical management of social, environmental and financial capital.
- Students develop innovative solutions to pressing problems, offering recommendations to increase sales, productivity or profits while being socially and environmentally responsible.
- Students analyze company-supplied data (using linear programming, regression, statistical tools, or simulation software) and offer strategic recommendations for improving sales, productivity or profits through a triple bottom line management approach.
- Students conduct research with company’s suppliers or customers and recommend ways to improve competitiveness through collaboration and innovation on sustainability challenges.
- Students analyze corporate culture and develop rationale and action plan for profitably integrating social and environmental responsibility in daily operating models.
- Students develop a performance improvement plan for inspiring employees to view social and environmental challenges as catalysts for innovation and improvement.
- Students prepare a sustainability report for publication on company’s web site.
- Students develop an econometric or forecasting model for a new product or strategic plan.
- Students apply international best practices to create an initiative for an American organization.
Timetable

Fall project:
- **Summer** – Interested prospective clients submit proposed project descriptions, specifications and deliverables for consideration
- **September** – Client and Duquesne faculty agree on scope, deliverables, milestones, and metrics for approved projects
- **October** – Project kick-off meeting at partner’s location
- **November** – Mid-project updates meeting with client, including question and answers
- **Early December** – Presentation of student findings and recommendations and submission of written analytical report

Winter project:
- **Summer/Fall** – Interested prospective clients submit proposed project descriptions, specifications and deliverables for consideration
- **November-December** – Client and Duquesne faculty agree on scope, deliverables, milestones, and metrics for approved projects
- **Early January** – Project kick-off meeting at client location
- **January-February** – Regular interface between client team and student team as students do primary and secondary research, benchmarking and analysis
- **March** – Mid-project status presentation at client location
- **Late April** – Presentations and report with recommendations

Summer practicum:
- **Fall** – Interested prospective clients submit proposed practicum descriptions, specifications, constraints and expectations for consideration
- **Spring** – Client and Duquesne faculty agree on logistics, scope, deliverables, milestones, and metrics for approved practicums
- **May** – Practicum kick-off meeting at partner’s location
- **May-June** – Students work at client site and interview stakeholders
- **Mid-June** – Mid-point presentations and feedback
- **Early July** – Final presentations and report with recommendations

**SPONSORSHIP OF MBA SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS**

Duquesne’s School of Business has achieved national and international recognition for academic excellence in ethics, sustainability, and community outreach. The strengths of our school and departments; our close ties with business, education and government agencies; and our location in Pittsburgh present significant opportunities to develop interdisciplinary programs targeting the world’s pressing needs.

“Sponsorship” of student learning experiences in the MBA Sustainability program is an opportunity for organizations that value social and environmental stewardship to support our work in preparing responsible future leaders. While we do not charge a fee or request a donation for project services, Duquesne University is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) organization and, as such, financial support for the program would be a charitable contribution.