MBA 629B – CREATING AND SUSTAINING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Spring 2007
Professors: Sheldon Balbirer (336) 334-5691 (Office)
E-Mail: shelly@uncg.edu (919) 489-9872 (Home)
John Englar
E-Mail johnenglar@aol.com (336) 272-3802

Required Texts: None

Purpose: MBA 629B is the full-time program’s capstone experience in which student teams complete large-scale projects with Piedmont North Carolina organizations. Depending on the nature of the project, students should be equipped to:

1. Develop a strategic/business plan that reflects an understanding of how to integrate the development, production, and marketing of goods and services in a global environment.

2. Identify funds requirements and design financing plans to support an organization’s strategic business plan.

3. Indicate how the ethical, legal, regulatory, social, political, and economic context in which the organization functions influences the project’s recommendations.

4. Indicate the contributions made by the human resource function, including how the management of change and cultural diversity impact the recommendations.

5. Work as a team to gather, organize, interpret, analyze and use information to formulate strategic alternatives for the organization, and to choose from among these alternatives.

6. Communicate the results of their recommendations in both orally and in writing.

Course Requirements: Final grades will be based on final report, oral presentation to the client, client evaluation and peer evaluations. The relative weights we will give to each component is as follows:

- Final Report: 40%
- Oral Presentation: 20%
- Client Evaluation: 20%
Peer Evaluation 20%

The final report is the most important component of your grade because it represents a permanent record of the group’s activities. Although the report’s content will depend on the nature of the project, each report must contain an executive summary of no more than three pages that indicates your key recommendations, as well as a brief outline of your reasoning. Your recommendations must be data-driven. Beyond this, reports should communicate a sense of literacy. It is impossible to take your policy recommendations seriously if the reader comes across numerous typos, misspellings and poor grammar. We will make reports from the spring of 2006 available to you in order to provide some examples of the work we expect.

Each group must make a formal presentation of their results/recommendations to the client organization. Since graduation is on Friday, May 11th, the presentation should be made no later than the week of April 30th. Groups that have not completed the final report and made a presentation to the client by 5:00PM on May 4th will receive an Incomplete. While you will be able to ‘walk at graduation,’ your degree cannot be awarded until a quality product is delivered to the client organization. Students are expected to make professional presentations using PowerPoint for visuals aids and handouts where appropriate.

Your instructors will evaluate the final reports and oral presentations. In addition, a representative of the client organization will evaluate your efforts based on how well you have addressed the core issues, the quality of your recommendations, and on the professionalism of your presentation. Keep in mind that perception is reality. What a client believes about how you have conducted yourself during the project will affect this component of your grade.

Finally, successful completion of a high quality paper/presentation requires much work and cooperation across team members. We will not tolerate ‘free riders;’ i.e. group members who do nothing and expect others to carry them. For this reason, your team members will determine a portion of your grade based on their assessment of your contribution to the project’s success. It is entirely possible that some group members could receive an A for MBA 629B while others could get a C. A copy of the peer evaluation for is attached.

TIPS FOR A GREAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE
The keys to success are early engagement in the project, planning, teamwork and a commitment to excellence. This is the capstone experience in the program and the quality of your work may get you a job with the client, or serve as evidence of a successful completion of an assignment to a prospective employer. Some specifics:

- Teams should meet with the client’s representatives at their site at twice once during the month of January. Your instructor (s) will set up the initial meeting. This will allow you to get the know the cast of characters you’ll be working with and their expected ‘deliverables.’ Keep in mind that the client’s opinion of the quality of your work counts for 20 percent of your final grade.
- Appoint a team leader/coordinator early. This person will serve as the communication link between the group and the client and your faculty advisors.
- After your initial meeting(s), prepare a detailed plan for completing the project. A Gantt Chart that identifies: (1) each important task in the project, (2) the length of time needed to complete each task, (3) who is to do each task, and (4) key milestones is a great planning tool. The plan should be available for review by your faculty advisors no later than January 31, 2007.
- Get in touch with your faculty advisors if serious issues arise with the client about the scope of the project.
- Begin writing your final report no later than April 1st, 2007. You may not have completed all of your data collection or analysis, but you can add these as you flesh out the report. Most of the reports done in the spring of 2006 were over 100 pages long with exhibits. No report will go out to a ‘client’ unless it is professional work. Not only must the content address the issues in a thorough manner, but it must look like it is coming from a consulting firm that bills its time at $300-$500 an hour.

Finally, there is a need to recognize that a successful project can contribute to building the value of the Bryan MBA brand. As daytime MBA programs go, we are the new kids on the block and MBA 629B gives you the opportunity to demonstrate that you are as good as any MBAs from higher-profile programs.
The purpose of this evaluation is to identify those team members who went the "extra mile" or who did their fair share of the work in completing the project. Conversely, if a team member did not do his/her fair share then that student should not get full credit for the group’s work. Be assured that all data on this form will be held in confidence.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF EVERY MANAGER’S JOB; WE EXPECT YOU TO PROVIDE A FAIR AND ACCURATE EVALUATION. RATE ALL OF YOUR TEAM MEMBERS EXCEPT YOURSELF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name on the first line</th>
<th>Attendance/Cooperation</th>
<th>Academic Contribution</th>
<th>Comparative Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Do not grade yourself on these dimensions; do rank yourself)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY TO NUMERICAL RANKING

ATTENDANCE & COOPERATION:
5 = Was a team leader; cooperation was superior
4 = Attended meetings regularly; good cooperation; a team player
3 = Attended meetings fairly regularly; did what was asked but no more
2 = Missed some meetings and did the minimum amount of work
1 = Poor attendance at meetings &/or poor cooperation/work load

ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION:
5 = A team leader in ideas; enthusiastic; a lot of good ideas
4 = Contributed greatly to the team; did more than his/her fair share
3 = Had good ideas from time to time; an average performance
2 = Was either too quiet or disinterested to be an effective academic contributor to the team
1 = Contributed little to the team

OVERALL COMPARATIVE RANKING:
5 = THE TEAM LEADER (or A team leader, if more than one)
4 = A team player, second to the leader(s) only slightly; Excellent work
3 = An average member of the team; good work
2 = Slightly below average member of the team
1 = Contributed the least to the team