APPLIED SKILLS INTERNSHIP
COM 390.001
Spring 2020
Dates: Fridays 1:30pm

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Office Hours: Mon. 12:30pm - 2:30pm; Tues. 12pm - 2pm; & Weds. 12:30pm - 2:30pm

Course Description

Three credit hours. Students are assigned a problem that a corporation currently confronts. The students are required to analyze the problem, and propose a solution to the corporation’s leadership. Assessment is performed by a local business executive whose goal is to verify from professional experience whether a student is equipped to function effectively in the contemporary workplace. The executive also serves as a mentor to students guiding them through the process of developing a proposal to a real-life business problem.

SFA is one of several institutions involved in the program. The top student from each institution will participate in a regional competition at which the various solutions are presented directly to the corporation’s leadership. The winning student earns a cash prize.

Students will meet with the instructor-of-record on a weekly basis (TBD) at 1pm to review assignments, receive feedback, and discuss the business problem with other SFA faculty and business leaders in the community. The course mentor will attend on a bi-monthly basis to work directly with students.

Course Schedule

- Program Orientation
- Annotated Bibliography and Problem Analysis paper, due 13 March 2020
- Proposed Solution with Literature Review, due Wednesday, 10 April 2020
- Poster Presentation, by 17 April 2020
- Applied Skills Competition, 1 May 2020

Text Books

- Maria Harr. 2015. *From Campus to Corporate: Soft Skills & Tips to Transition with Confidence.* 102nd Place, LLC.
Program Learning Outcomes

An internship ties together outcomes students are expected to acquire in their academic major. The purpose is for students to demonstrate what they have learned through a professional work experience. The specific program outcomes apply to any program in the liberal arts no matter the student’s major. These outcomes include the following:

- The discipline’s academic theory will link to practical workplace experiences.
- New learning will occur through challenging and meaningful activities.
- Marketable skills will be acquired that are transferrable from one occupation to another within a framework of diverse and global cultures.
- Readings and research will provide a theoretical and ethical base for critical analyses and solution development.
- Visual and oral presentations will be the culminating experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

- The student will demonstrate the ability to research a complicated workplace problem, to understand its context, causes, and effects, and to develop a feasible solution.
- The student will demonstrate the ability to work in a team effectively.
- The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a professional audience.
- The student will demonstrate the ability to make a clear and persuasive oral presentation before a public audience.
- The student will become acquainted with the norms of a corporate workplace.

Course Requirements

The program requires students to compose two papers and deliver a poster presentation. Assessments of the assignments are made by the on-campus mentor(s). Grading rubrics for the papers are based on four criteria that rate performance on a five-point scale, from excellent to not adequate. The first paper is divided into two sections, an annotated bibliography and a problem analysis. Each section can earn a maximum of 20 points (4 criteria X 5 points), making the first assignment worth a total of 40 points. The second paper involves proposing a solution to the problem under analysis. This assignment is critical because it is the end-product of the semester’s work, with the best solutions presented to the corporation’s leadership. The paper is worth a maximum of 40 points (4 criteria X 10 points).

The third assignment (30 points) requires students to convert their solution into a poster that provides a synopsis of the proposal. The poster is orally presented to the class much
like what occurs in a corporation’s boardroom. The final element of assessment – and the most important – is the evaluation of each student’s overall performance on the seven skills sought by employers. A skill can earn a maximum of 20 points for a total of 140 possible points (7 skills X 20) toward the final grade.

The assignments cumulate to 250 possible points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Paper</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Paper</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster Presentation</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Assessment</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Total</td>
<td>250</td>
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**First Paper (40 points).**

The first paper is divided into two sections, an annotated bibliography and a problem analysis. Each section can earn a maximum of 20 points (4 criteria X 5 points), making the first assignment worth a total of 40 points. The paper is due to the mentor on March 13, by 5 p.m.

**Annotated Bibliography.** The first section of the paper requires students to create an annotated bibliography of at least six sources relevant to the business-world problem under examination. Each source must be summarized in two to three sentences. The summary should capture the thesis of the source and any critical information to be drawn from it. Each student must do his or her own bibliography. This is not a group assignment. Sources will be evaluated for their quality, relevance, and timeliness. Writing will also be evaluated in terms of style, mechanics, and formatting. APA style must be followed.

**Problem Analysis.** The second section of the paper requires students to analyze the workplace problem by addressing three issues: (1) defining the problem by describing its origin, context, and who it affects; (2) examining potential causes of the problem in terms of the conditions that contributed to its development and the things making it difficult to resolve; and (3) describing the effects of the problem to the organization and the consequences if it is not resolved. The analysis must be concise – about 1,000 words – so it is important to be direct and on-topic. Ask the reporter’s questions: What is the problem? How did it start? Who does it affect? When did it become a concern? What are its costs? Where is it causing problems? Why does it need to be resolved? The analysis should be supported by solid evidence (authorities, reliable data/statistics, etc.). Additionally, the use of excellent grammar and mechanics is being assessed. APA style must be followed.

**Second Paper (40 points).**

The second paper involves proposing a solution to the problem under analysis. This assignment is critical because it is the end-product of the semester’s work, with the best
solutions presented to the corporation’s leadership. The paper is worth a maximum of 40 points (4 criteria X 10 points).

The first step in the assignment is for students from the various institutions to be divided into two or more workgroups to prepare for a discussion with the leadership team of the business that posed the problem. Each workgroup must decide upon three questions to ask the leadership team in an effort to obtain insight on how to handle the problem. These questions will be forwarded to the business’s leadership team in advance of a separate conference call with each student workgroup. The phone call should be arranged no later than two weeks from the start of the assignment. During the conference calls, the leadership team answers the questions posed by a workgroup and the students can ask up to ten minutes of follow-up questions. Mentors should be in attendance to assess the performance of their students.

Students should use the insights obtained from the corporate leadership in writing their problem solution paper. This paper requires students to propose a solution to the workplace problem. The paper itself should be divided into two parts. The first section should be an executive summary that briefly analyzes the problem and proposes a solution (about 1,000 words). This summary should be well-organized and supported by solid reasoning and evidence. As in the previous paper, clearly define the problem, explain why it is a problem, identify contributing causes, and describe the problem’s effects on the business. Factors to consider are the feasibility of the solution, what is needed to implement it, and counter-arguments to it.

The second section of the paper should be a literature review (about 2,000 words). The review should summarize the findings and conclusions of the sources used in the paper. In doing so, make connections between the sources and identify any patterns or trends that exist among the sources. Both the proposed solution and literature review should reflect excellent grammar and mechanics. The paper is due to the mentor on April 10, by 5 p.m. APA style must be followed.

**Poster Presentation (30 points).**

Students are required to convert their proposed solution to the business problem into a PowerPoint poster. The goal is to summarize the main points of the solution through a combination of text and graphics. The title of the proposal should be at the top of the poster – the title and author’s name on the center, left, or right of the poster (font 72). The font of the body should be font 27) preferably in bold. Works cited or references should have a smaller font than 27, suggested font 22. Provide brief statements of introduction, results, and conclusions. Include the major points only. When preparing a poster, consider the following questions:

- Would someone reading the poster understand the major findings or points of the proposed solution to the business problem?

- Would a careful reader be able to ask relevant questions about the proposal?

- Is the sequence of information clear? Arrows, numbers, and/or letters could be used to let the reader know the flow of information. Pictures and graphics are effective
in conveying information in a short-hand fashion. During the semester, templates illustrating how a poster could be formatted will be presented.

No later than April 17, students orally and visually present their posters to the other members of the class who act as executives of the corporation. They may interrupt to ask questions at any time during a presentation.

**Skills Assessment (140 points).**

The greatest weight in assessment is allocated to the professional skills demonstrated by the students throughout the semester-long program. A skill can earn a maximum of 20 points for a total of 140 possible points (7 skills X 20) toward the final grade, and the seven skills are listed below.

- Professionalism
- Problem Solving
- Oral Communication
- Intercultural Fluency
- Teamwork
- Leadership

During the semester, a rubric will presented to give you a better feel how each will be evaluated.

**Academic Integrity**

The following is taken from SFA’s *Policy Manual* and can be found in section 4.1 – **Student Academic Dishonesty**: Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism as well as the appeal process.

All cases of academic dishonesty, both cheating and plagiarism, will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-4.1 & A-6.3). Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another
source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving
the author due credit. While these are not exhaustive lists, students who are curious should
peruse SFA’s Policy Manual. Specifically, you should focus on section 4.1 – STUDENT
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.

To be clear, I do not take academic dishonesty lightly, and the consequences
for academic dishonesty will be an “F” for the course. No exceptions.

Withheld Grades

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2014), “Semester Grades Policy”
(A-54): At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic
chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course
work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within
one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in
future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated
course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids,
students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Ser-
vices Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the
semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommo-
dation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner
may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.
edu/disabilityservices/

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class
or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student
Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be
subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional
forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instruc-
tor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the
classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class
projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.