

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

Using Sequential Research Methods and Leading Change Courses to Increase Connections between Students and Community Partners. The session will describe a novel approach which allows undergraduate students to practice their newly learned research methods and change management skills in a way that develops their confidence and provides meaningful impact in their community. The presenter will explain the actions necessary to solicit community partners, define common research objectives, manage the activities of up to 50 undergraduate students operating in ten teams, and produce results that are valuable to the community partners; all while providing an exceptional learning experience for the students. **Keywords:** Community Engagement, Applied Research Methods, Change Management.

2) Teaching Implications:

Students in one or two sections of the research methods course focus on a common issue facing a group of organizations. In the past, the students have partnered with independent schools concerned with enrollment, non-profit organizations interested in maintaining stakeholder engagement in major fundraising events, and academic and administrative departments interested in increasing levels of alumni engagement. Students work in five-person teams with their own community partner. Throughout the semester, team efforts are consolidated to produce one interview schedule, one literature review and conceptual model, one survey, one analysis of the composite data set, and multiple presentations and reports of the findings tailored to their own community partner. In the subsequent change management course, the teams work closely with their community partners to develop, implement and assess change proposals that are unique to their community partner's needs.

The research methods course is designed to provide students the opportunity to develop and practice the knowledge and skills necessary to review, apply and conduct organizational research. Major topics include the scientific method, sampling, secondary data gathering, observation and interviews, survey construction, data analysis and experimental design. The community partners define a decision situation based on their concerns for one or more of three outcome constructs: effectiveness of products and services; efficiency of operations; and engagement of employees, partners, investors and customers. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the students identify strategies, structures, processes and interactions that can potentially affect these outcomes. The students learn about their client's decision situation, develop empirically supported and actionable theories, collect data that facilitates meaningful inferences, and develop interventions that will allow the organization to implement change and assess its effects. The activities require students to identify a focal research question, review journal articles and archival data, conduct interviews and integrate their research findings into conceptual models. The students determine how to measure the identified constructs in the context of the decision situation, develop a sampling strategy, collect and analyze data, and present findings and suggest recommendations.

The change management is a senior capstone that encourages students to integrate knowledge and skills developed in their previous management courses. Students learn and apply proven methods to help organizations achieve goals and build capabilities to meet future challenges. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how change helps organizational success. The course mirrors the type of interactive communication and analytical processes experienced by managers in organizations to help students develop confidence in applying their management knowledge and skills to the types of problems, processes, and decisions that are faced by leaders in all types of organizations. A substantial portion of the course focuses on the application of sustainable in a semester long change project with their client. The student teams prepare summaries that document the activities and decisions for each distinct phase of the process.

3) Session Description and Plan:

The session will be a presentation of the process followed to set up and implement the two course sequence illustrated with examples from the three projects that were completed. I propose the following timeline. There are 12 topics. Assuming a 60 minute session, I would expect to spend about five minutes on each topic.

- Approaching community partners and defining research goals
- Course overview/schedule for the research methods course
- Library instruction and creating a shared annotated bibliography
- Developing the interview schedule and initial IRB application
- Interviews, transcripts and developing a conceptual model
- Developing constructs, operational definitions and the revised IRB application
- Data collection and analysis
- Development and delivery of custom presentations and reports
- Course overview/schedule for the change management course
- Initial and subsequent client meetings
- Contracting and developing a plan of action
- Empowering students to empower clients, while keeping an eye on the schedule

The goal will be to establish a conversation with the participants so that they can ask questions and interject suggestions for improving the process.

4) Application to Conference theme:

The session describes an approach that combines the high impact practice of undergraduate research with the high impact practice of community engaged learning and collaborative research that provides students the opportunity to put in practice what they are learning and develop narratives that will help them land jobs and gain access to graduate schools; and make a difference in their community.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

The research conducted with my students in two of the class sequences was presented at the Eastern Academy of Management conferences in 2015 and 2016. In both presentations, there was as much interest in the pedagogy as there was in the actual research. More than a few eyebrows were raised, when I put up a slide showing that I had 45 co-authors. This is the first presentation I've done that has focused on the pedagogy.