## THE ROLE OF FIELD-BASED BUSINESS CONSULTING EXPERIENCES IN AACSB BUSINESS EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY AND STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*This research was designed to explore the critical variables associated with field-based consultancy (FBC) experiences as an aid to designing successful FBC programs. It is generally acknowledged that there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with FBC at the student, instructor, and institutional level. Deans, other university administrators, and faculty have sometimes questioned this form of program instruction, from the perspectives of resource allocation and the appropriateness of this type of faculty activity in the typical university reward system. A mail survey was conducted of business school administrators to ascertain the extent of involvement with FBC and the associated success factors. The findings from this study validate some basic underpinnings of business education curriculum and design. Student-based factors influencing success include smaller classes, usually at a senior or graduate level, graded coursework (as opposed to pass/fail), and full-time students. As a learning method, field-based learning adds value to students, to clients involved, to the faculty and to the institutions. The hurdles continue to be the need for a fair allocation of the time and resources to the parties involved.*

### INTRODUCTION

As we enter a new millennium, many business disciplines are undergoing a major and pronounced period of change. Those critical of traditional academic approaches have called for significant improvements to increase the relevance of what is taught and to improve the quality of graduates. Part of these challenges stem from more systemic critiques of business education in general. In recent years, academic programs in business have come under fire for being too passive, for possessing too many artificial boundaries between disciplines, and for being too teacher-directed. The most recent call to reinvent college education started in the 1980s (Lindquist & Marienau, 1981; Chickering, 1981). Business schools have responded to this call for change by restructuring, rebalancing and reconfiguring their programs rather than

completely reinventing them (West & Aupperle, 1996). They have made major changes in their curricula to emphasize active learning, integrated learning, and self-directed learning. Of course, the Small Business Institute™ (SBI) has known this for decades, setting the standard in its SBI Case Methodology, which is now widely referred to as field-based consulting. This experiential process of learning by doing, reflecting and then (often) re-doing, is at the heart of most any success story. The Small Business Institute program has since the early 1970s been involved in active learning, and pre-dated the reinvention of the modern business school curriculum, through its use of field-based consulting (FBC). By exposing countless students to small, entrepreneurial ventures, the SBI has undoubtedly been a leading force in developing entrepreneurial spirit in business school students and integrating much of their disjointed traditional classroom experiences, but the SBI program has, in our opinion, often been undervalued and misunderstood by faculty and administrators.

In the 1990s, a report released by the Secretary's Commission on Necessary Skills (SCANS) set the stage for integrating the skills, knowledge and abilities learned in college with "the skills employers want." The report defined five broad categories of competencies, including: (1) resources, (2) interpersonal, (3) information, (4) systems, and (5) technology (SCANS, 1991). The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) also joined the chorus calling for changes in business education by placing greater emphasis on the need for integrating capstone experiences for students. These capstone experiences can take the form of internships, cases, ethics, and team-based experiential activities (AACSB, 1994).

There is some question whether the revised accreditation standards of AACSB allow for business schools to become more responsive to their markets. West and Aupperle (1996) argue that the current university infrastructure may prevent the necessary entrepreneurial spirit to pick and choose the most appropriate curriculum design. Yet this kind of strategic management is what is needed most for business schools to provide utility. In this same general area of infrastructure concerns, another problem continues to be the disconnection between the value placed on traditional, academically rigorous research by the university (tenure committees, etc.) and by managers and practitioners (Dulek & Fielden, 1992). Most managers and practitioners in business fields rely on their trade journals, finding them more relevant or practical than many academic journals.

Interestingly, business schools are finding programs that integrate real-world concerns with various academic disciplines can produce collaborative teaching, learning and scholarship. The Small Business Institute Program has emphasized this type of integrative service learning for many years, but its place in the curriculum has often been questioned. Deans, other administrators, and faculty have questioned not only the resources demanded by this type of program but also the appropriateness of the faculty activity in the typical university reward system.

If programs such as these are to be successful, the administration of colleges of business must actively support the individuals and departments engaging in these endeavors. A necessary step is for the deans to understand the costs (in time and resources) and benefits provided by such programs to the interested constituency. Therefore, as a first step, the authors surveyed business deans to provide a clear understanding of the perceptions that administrators have of many aspects of field-based consulting. The remainder of the paper provides an overview of field based consulting, a description of the study, the results of the study, and concluding comments

## FIELD-BASED CONSULTING

Although not new, FBC has been highlighted in the reconfiguration of both undergraduate and graduate business programs.  Many business schools currently require some form of field-based consulting in their curricula.  For example, MBA students at the University of Virginia are placed on student teams that work with local businesses as consultants. The students then present their findings to the company's executives (Byrne, 1993).  Similarly, undergraduate students at Emory University in Atlanta enroll in field study courses where they spend the majority of their time working with executives on-site (West & Aupperle, 1996).  UCLA's Graduate School of Management also has a Management Field Study Program that provides students with an opportunity to define and solve a business problem.  UCLA's program is unique in that it has a group writing component designed to train and improve students' abilities to produce high quality group reports (Forman & Katsky, 1986).  A number of leading business schools now use a field-based consulting experience as the culminating component of the MBA degree.

Business schools are also forging more corporate partnerships, with one result being an increase in field-based consulting projects.  A number of leading MBA programs, including Duke University, University of Chicago, and the University of Virginia, have recently instituted such programs (West & Aupperle, 1996).  One example of corporate involvement exists at the University of Michigan, where business executives helped design a program that places students in medical school-style residencies.  The students, as teams, work on company problems and are supervised by both faculty and business managers (Byrne, 1992).  The increased use of field-based consulting has enabled business programs to bridge the gap between academic learning and applied practice in organizations.  This has enhanced the learning experience for students and provided a beneficial community service to firms.

### Value to Clients

Several researchers have examined the use of business students as consultants from the client's point of view.  A review by Weinstein, Nicholls and Seaton (1992) evaluated client perception based on four dimensions—professionalism, knowledge, practicality, and overall value.  Their study concluded that clients had more favorable perceptions than unfavorable and asserted that such consulting activities improved their marketing activities by providing firms with objectivity and planning insight.  Madison and Junell (1998) developed an empirical model of client perception of student consulting projects.  Their results indicated that marketing students may perform better in field-based consulting assignments and that clients who responded to the survey tended to be satisfied with the results of the consulting project.  O'Connor and Rogers (1988) also found that both clients and students benefited from field-based consulting activities.  Although there are some risks involved for clients and not all projects are equivalent in quality, the clients in these studies generally found value in the work performed by the student consultants.

### Value to Students

A number of researchers have investigated the role of business students as consultants.  Many have found that field-based consulting generates high levels of student satisfaction.  Daly and Mitchell (1995) note that since business students tend to be more applications oriented, they want more "skill building" from the curriculum, rather than mere "book learning."  Daly and Mitchell found that students enjoyed the hands-on nature of their project and benefited from the opportunity to learn about the complexity of organizations.  Jessup (1995) studied the implementation of a new capstone course using field-based consulting as the senior culminating experience at California State University, San Marcos.  He noted that students

found the learning experience to be challenging and useful. Students also appreciated the opportunity to hone their analytical thinking skills and their ability to manage group dynamics, while gaining practical experience. Muir (1996) also found that students involved in a consulting experience had mainly positive outcomes and gained an understanding of applying a critical approach to technical and business communication in the social environment of the organization. These studies indicate that students have valued the use of field-based consulting experiences as an important part of their learning.

## LEARNING THEORY AND FIELD-BASED CONSULTING

The process used in field-based consulting corresponds closely to Kolb's learning theory on experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Learning, as a process, encompasses four different stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. For the adult learner, this model could also be used to describe field-based consulting. In the FBC context, prior experiences become the concrete basis for reflection and observation of current events. Then, logical inferences are drawn and systems or models are derived from the intellectual discipline. The final stage of active experimentation, the applied aspect of field consulting, completes the learning cycle and can become the concrete experience for the next round of processing (Kolb & Lewis, 1986).

Field-based consulting rates high in the area of active, hands-on learning. Indeed, immediate, concrete experiences, occurring outside of the classroom fill these activities with relevance for the learner, as well as a high level of personal responsibility (Kolb & Lewis, 1986). The areas not easily incorporated into field-based activities are reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. Some would argue that these skills are not easily recognized as valuable by the workplace at large. Yet these later areas are what higher education is most readily able to provide. The problem seems to be in helping students integrate or transfer the classroom learning of theory and reflection to the workplace activities (AACSB, 1994).

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS WITH FIELD-BASED CONSULTING

Little research exists which suggests how business schools should organize their field-based consulting programs. It is generally acknowledged that there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with FBC at the student, instructor, and institutional level. In addition, issues of structuring the experience, grading, whether the experience is required or elective, faculty compensation, support resources, funding, appropriateness for adjunct faculty, factors leading to a successful consultancy experience, and the attraction of field-based consultancy sites are all issues of concern. The university administration, the delivering faculty and students may view the associated advantages and disadvantages differently. For example, Beatty, Haas and Sciglimpaglia (1996) conducted an extensive research project on evaluation of business student performance in team-based FBC projects. Their research identified major instructional issues related to grade equity, student assessment, and learning outcomes of such projects. The study showed that, in addition to instruction-centered criteria such as meeting of group deadlines and quality of group output, student perceptions of group compatibility, workload equity and grade equity are important to the success of field-based consulting.

## THE STUDY

This research was designed to explore the critical variables associated with field-based consultancy experiences as an aid to designing successful FBC programs. To ascertain the extent of involvement with FBC and the associated success factors, a mail questionnaire was sent to 594 Deans of AACSB accredited business schools. Deans and/or their designee

returned a total of 141 questionnaires (a response rate of twenty-four percent). Of these, a total of 80 programs currently report using FBC at either the undergraduate or graduate level (56.7% of all schools). These responses became the basis of the experience survey. The major thrusts of the survey were to determine:

1. Advantages and disadvantages to students, faculty, and institution associated with field-based consulting experiences;
2. Alternative ways of structuring the field-based consulting experiences;
3. Alternative grading policies employed in field-based consulting experiences;
4. Alternative-faculty-related issues (compensation, instructional support, etc.);
5. Key success factors for a field-based consulting experience;
6. Key business-related success factors for a field-based experience; and
7. Site recruitment policies.

The results of the study should be very useful to administrators and faculty who currently conduct field-based consultancy experiences. Additionally this research should be extremely helpful to those considering the adoption of such programs.

## RESULTS

### Administrative Organization

Respondents were asked to estimate the current use of FBC as a portion of the academic program. As shown in Table 1, programs typically utilize FBC in less than one quarter of courses offered. Student consulting makes up less than fifty percent of the student's total workload in those courses with an FBC component (Table 2).

### Table 1
### Current Usage of Field-Based Consulting in Responding AACSB Schools:
### Proportion of Undergraduate and Graduate Courses which Utilize FBC

| *Type of Course* | *Percent of Schools Reported Using FBC in This Proportion of Courses* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None | 1-25% | 26-50% | 51-75% | 76-100% | N |
| Undergraduate | 8.8% | 82.5% | 6.3% | 1.3% | *1.3% | (80) |
| Graduate | 16.3% | 71.3% | 6.3% | 2.5% | 3.9% | (80) |

*Read as: of all 80 responding schools, 1.3% use FBC in 76-100% of all UG courses.*

### Table 2
### Student Consulting Workload as Proportion of Total Course Assignment
### in Field-Based Consulting Courses

| *Type of Course* | *Proportion of All Courses Using FBC* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | None | 1-25% | 26-50% | 51-75% | 76-100% | N |
| Undergraduate | 1.3% | 33.3% | 34.7% | 20.0% | 10.7% | (75) |
| Graduate | 3.1% | 33.8% | 24.6% | 20.0% | 18.5% | (65) |

Roughly one quarter of the responding AACSB schools currently require an FBC experience at the graduate level, while slightly less required it for undergraduates (18.7%). These results are shown in Table 3. From an administrative standpoint, respondents were asked about the types of student assignments used. Most FBC assignments use group projects, with the typical size of the group being four people at both the graduate and undergraduate levels (Table 4).

### Table 3
### Field-Based Consulting Experience Required for Graduation

| Program | *Percent* | | *N* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Yes* | *No* | |
| Undergraduate | 18.7 | 81.3 | (75) |
| Graduate | 24.7 | 75.3 | (74) |

### Table 4
### Formation of Student Field-Based Consulting Assignment

| *Class Level* | *Type of Assignment* | | *Average Group Size* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Individual* | *Group* | |
| Undergraduate | 11.3% | 88.7% | 4 |
| Graduate | 19.7% | 80.3% | 4 |

### Issues Affecting FBC Success

A major purpose of this research was to assess factors that impact the success of FBC projects. The researchers did not explicitly define "success" for respondents, since this was intended as an overall collective evaluation measure. Certain factors are implicitly linked to successful results, such as class size. First, class size and student issues were examined (Table 5). It is clear that successful implementation is very sensitive to class size, with the optimum being twenty or fewer students. Large classes (40 or more) are seen as very detrimental. Being a part-time student negatively impacts success (39.3% adverse effect) as well as the usage of individual versus group assignment (41.2%). All three factors are significant at the 0.05 level.

From an administrative standpoint, the types of courses and grading issues were also examined, as shown in Table 6. FBC is seen as applicable to a broad range of academic disciplines in business, ranging from Management (63.1% very positive) and Marketing (52.4%) to Finance (35.7%) and Accounting (32.1%). Both graduate level (72.1%) and senior level courses are seen as appropriate. The grading option is clearly advised. All of these three factors are significant at the 0.05 level. Interestingly, although FBC is seen as appropriate for either required or elective classes, use in an elective course is favored although this preference is not statistically significant.

### Table 5 - Student Factors Influencing Success of Field-Based Consulting Experience

| *Factor* | *Effect* | | | | | *Significance* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Very Adverse* | *Somewhat Adverse* | *None* | *Somewhat Positive* | *Very Positive* | Chi Square | df | sig. |
| **Class Size** | | | | | | | | |
| 20 students or less | 1.2% | 3.7% | 22.0% | 8.5% | 64.6% | | | |
| 21 – 40 students | 25.0 | 12.5 | 38.9 | 11.1 | 12.5 | | | |
| 41 – 60 students | 56.8 | 21.6 | 16.2 | 1.4 | 4.1 | | | |
| Over 60 students | 75.0 | 6.9 | 12.5 | 1.4 | 4.2 | | | |
| | | | | | | 194.4 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Type of Student** | | | | | | | | |
| Part-time | 16.5 | 22.8 | 46.8 | 6.3 | 7.6 | | | |
| Full-time | 1.3 | 1.3 | 42.1 | 15.8 | 39.5 | | | |
| | | | | | | 44.4 | 4 | 0.00 |
| **Student Assignment** | | | | | | | | |
| Individual | 19.1 | 22.1 | 30.9 | 13.2 | 14.7 | | | |
| Team | 1.4 | 0.0 | 13.5 | 25.7 | 59.5 | | | |
| | | | | | | 58.0 | 4 | 0.00 |

### Table 6 - Administrative Factors Influencing Success of Field-Based Consulting

| *Factor* | *Effect* | | | | | *Significance* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Very Adverse* | *Somewhat Adverse* | *None* | *Somewhat Positive* | *Very Positive* | Chi Square | df | Sig. |
| **Type of Course** | | | | | | | | |
| Management | 0.0% | 0.0% | 20.0% | 16.9% | 63.1% | | | |
| Marketing | 1.6 | 1.6 | 23.8 | 20.6 | 52.4 | | | |
| Computer/MIS | 1.8 | 3.6 | 33.9 | 17.9 | 42.9 | | | |
| Finance | 1.8 | 1.8 | 37.5 | 23.2 | 35.7 | | | |
| Accounting | 3.8 | 1.9 | 39.6 | 20.8 | 32.1 | | | |
| | | | | | | 33.4 | 16 | 0.01 |
| **Course Level** | | | | | | | | |
| Lower Division | 63.6 | 21.8 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 7.3 | | | |
| Junior Level | 23.7 | 22.0 | 20.3 | 22.0 | 11.9 | | | |
| Senior Level | 0.0 | 1.4 | 12.5 | 18.1 | 68.1 | | | |
| Graduate Level | 0.0 | 1.6 | 14.8 | 11.5 | 72.1 | | | |
| | | | | | | 174.8 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Grading** | | | | | | | | |
| Letter Grade | 2.7 | 5.4 | 16.2 | 17.6 | 58.1 | | | |
| Pass/Fail | 25.5 | 29.1 | 32.7 | 3.6 | 9.1 | | | |
| | | | | | | 68.9 | 4 | 0.00 |
| **Required or Elective Course** | | | | | | | | |
| Required | 15.3 | 13.6 | 23.7 | 11.9 | 35.6 | | | |
| Elective | 3.4 | 8.6 | 22.4 | 22.4 | 43.1 | | | |
| | | | | | | 8.3 | 4 | 0.08 |

### Table 7 – Client Factors Influencing Success of Field Based Consulting Experience

| Factor | Effect | | | | | Significance | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Very Adverse* | *Somewhat Adverse* | *None* | *Somewhat Positive* | *Very Positive* | Chi Square | df | sig. |
| **Type of Organization** | | | | | | | | |
| Profit | 0.0% | 1.2% | 49.4% | 8.6% | 40.7% | | | |
| Non-Profit | 5.1 | 1.3 | 62.8 | 9.0 | 21.8 | | | |
| | | | | | | 10.7 | 4 | 0.03 |
| **Industry Sector** | | | | | | | | |
| Service | 0.0 | 2.5 | 58.8 | 10.0 | 28.8 | | | |
| Retail | 0.0 | 0.0 | 57.0 | 15.2 | 27.8 | | | |
| Manufacturing | 1.3 | 1.3 | 53.2 | 16.5 | 27.8 | | | |
| Government | 10.7 | 16.0 | 50.7 | 8.0 | 14.7 | | | |
| | | | | | | 53.2 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Time in Business** | | | | | | | | |
| Under 1 year | 14.3 | 29.9 | 37.7 | 5.2 | 13.0 | | | |
| 1 – 3 years | 2.6 | 6.4 | 50.0 | 17.9 | 23.1 | | | |
| 3 – 5 years | 1.3 | 0.0 | 41.8 | 26.6 | 30.4 | | | |
| Over 5 years | 1.3 | 1.3 | 41.8 | 15.2 | 40.5 | | | |
| | | | | | | 76.9 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Number of Employees** | | | | | | | | |
| 10 employees or less | 7.6 | 6.3 | 57.0 | 8.9 | 20.3 | | | |
| 11 – 50 | 0.0 | 1.3 | 57.0 | 15.2 | 26.6 | | | |
| 51 – 100 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 60.8 | 10.1 | 24.1 | | | |
| Over 100 employees | 7.8 | 3.9 | 59.7 | 7.8 | 20.8 | | | |
| | | | | | | 119.9 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Annual Revenues** | | | | | | | | |
| Under $50,000 | 15.1 | 17.8 | 45.2 | 6.8 | 15.1 | | | |
| $50,000 - $100,000 | 9.6 | 9.6 | 50.7 | 12.3 | 17.8 | | | |
| $100,001 - $500,000 | 4.1 | 2.7 | 59.5 | 13.5 | 20.3 | | | |
| $500,001 - $1,000,000 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 62.2 | 17.6 | 17.6 | | | |
| Over $1,000,000 | 0.0 | 2.8 | 58.3 | 9.7 | 29.2 | | | |
| | | | | | | 47.7 | 16 | 0.00 |
| **Proximity to Campus** | | | | | | | | |
| 5 miles or less | 0.0 | 0.0 | 26.6 | 15.2 | 58.2 | | | |
| 6 – 10 miles | 2.5 | 1.3 | 40.5 | 21.5 | 34.2 | | | |
| 11 – 20 miles | 6.5 | 26.0 | 41.6 | 10.4 | 15.6 | | | |
| Over 20 miles | 36.4 | 29.9 | 24.7 | 5.2 | 3.9 | | | |
| | | | | | | 165.5 | 12 | 0.00 |
| **Alumni in Organization*** | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 1.3 | 2.6 | 37.7 | 22.1 | 36.4 | | | |

*\* Question format did not allow cross tabulation analysis.*

## Client Factors

Finally, this study evaluated success factors related to the types of clients used in FBC programs. The results are shown in Table 7. Both profit and non-profit organizations are seen as good potential clients, with for-profit companies preferred. Similarly, the results were fairly uniform across various industry sectors from which such projects originate. However, over one quarter feel that working with government clients adversely affects FBC success.

The results regarding organization size and tenure are somewhat mixed. Most respondents felt that FBC can be successful with organizations of various sizes, with the exception of those with minimal revenues. Start-ups are also seen as problematic (44.2% adverse) for student projects. Client proximity to campus, as an ease of access issue, is most helpful. All of these factors are significant at the 0.05 level. Finally, although not cross tabulated, having an alumnus in the client organization is also seen as extremely helpful.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study validate some basic underpinnings of business education curriculum and design. Student-based factors influencing success include smaller classes, usually at a senior or graduate level of study, graded coursework as opposed to pass/fail, and full time students. Client factors influencing success indicated that the respondents viewed for-profit, non-governmental, established businesses as the more favorable clients. Lastly, a client-business within a five-mile radius of campus was also viewed as adding to the success of the project. The respondents rated the number of employees and the annual revenues evenly, with no one category viewed as more or less successful.

The client factors' that helped influence success in FBC mirror a client profile that is prevalent in many programs. Using our university as one model, our students deal primarily with for-profit service and retail businesses, with only an occasional manufacturer. The bulk of our requests are for feasibility studies, business plans, marketing, cost studies, growth management plans or accounting system development (computerization). The business owners usually employ five or fewer people, have been in business three to five years, generate annual revenues of $100,000 or less and are from 11-20 miles from campus. Although no authoritative literature yielded a specific profile for SBI clients, this profile seems to be typical, and can provide a reasonable basis to evaluate the findings from this survey of deans.

A review of the literature shows many examples of perceived value to both clients and students (Byrne, 1993; Madison & Junell, 1998; Daly & Mitchell, 1995), but little research in the area of faculty concerns. The study raises both some unanswered questions as well as some areas to investigate further, given the nature of the university infrastructure.

In the area of unanswered questions, future research should investigate faculty and department concerns related to resource allocation. For example, Marketing and Management courses were viewed to have the most positive effect on the outcome of a field-based learning experience. But departments and faculty also express concern that field-based learning can take away from already scarce resources, thus not being in the best interest of the department. Individual faculty may see these time-intensive courses as a deterrent to tenure.

These concerns go to the core of the way the typical college of business is organized, its infrastructure, reward system and departmental model, none of which are actively supportive of field-based learning. The need for time and resources is universal. One solution may be the need to be more realistic in the alignment of a school's mission, culture and rewards. Schools

clamoring for Carnegie designations and the perceived need to prove research respectability may have few resources to apply to time-intensive pedagogies such as field-based learning. Clear and realistic alignment of goals and resources is mandatory for success (West and Aupperle, 1996).

Another solution starting to surface is the need to expand the definition of scholarship to include applied projects involving students and the community. To recognize that faculty can apply the tenets of scholarship to teaching and service as well as research may allow for areas such as field-based learning to be fairly rewarded and compensated. This broader definition may also help broaden and integrate traditional research projects (Dulek and Fielden, 1992).

The nature and extent of funding for these projects should also be examined. Many models currently rely on faculty release time for such classes, which may appear unreasonable to the public or business community. Incentive pay based on number of cases handled might be a more realistic approach in tight budget times, as well as be appealing to faculty.

The findings reported by the deans in regards to the need for graded coursework might be re-examined in light of the work being done in the area of service learning. Student volunteers, under the guidance of faculty, have accomplished meaningful, competent work projects without a letter grade. Such examples include the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), and Students for Free Enterprise (SIFE). In a related area, smaller projects which include a component of field-based observations can be used in lower-level classes and help train the students in basic components of consulting skills (listening, observing, phrasing questions, writing findings), as well as provide relevance and motivation. (Oestreich, Venable and Doran, 1998). Additional study is needed to consider the use of these smaller projects, to see if the smaller project can provide some of the same benefits without the negative aspects of timing and scheduling conflicts inherent with full-time projects.

As a learning method, field-based learning adds value to students, to clients involved, to the faculty and to the institutions. The hurdles continue to be the need for a fair allocation of the time and resources to the parties involved. Once the value added by FBC programs to the students, clients, faculty and institution are clearly understood, it should be easier for college administrations to fairly support faculty involvement in Small Business Institute and other associated programs

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