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11-12-2020

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An MBA Capstone Consulting Experience in the Midst of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

In alignment with Molloy College's commitment to civic engagement, the MBA program requires prospective graduates to complete its Capstone course, which entails providing consulting services to a not-for-profit organization. The course requires students to apply their cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills to solve real problems for their clients. In one short semester, students must form working relationships with fellow project members, develop an understanding of their client's mission and objectives, and propose solutions that address their client's challenging problems. The semester culminates with the delivery of a written proposal, a formal presentation to the client, and a final reflection.

This paper describes the consulting problems faced by a class of Spring 2020 MBA students and the additional challenges they encountered due to the COVID-19 epidemic. It also describes the local organization the students worked with (the I'm Not Done Yet Foundation) and the solutions the students designed to increase awareness of the organization, improve its financial position, and streamline its internal operations.

Keywords

Education, consulting, not-for-profit, marketing, accounting, finance, social responsibility

1 PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Our school's mission is rooted in the Dominican tradition of study, spirituality, service and community, which is exemplified by the students in its MBA program. In addition to traditional MBA courses, students must complete a business ethics course as well as a Capstone course. The program is designed to prepare students to become leaders in their respective fields and conduct business in a socially responsible manner.

The Capstone program was designed by faculty in the spirit of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge. Teams of students work with not-for-profit organizations that address unmet community needs and provide benefits to society. Each student team develops a proposal for its client that describes the vision of the organization, the research conducted by team members, the recommendations of the team and the steps the client needs to take to fully implement the solutions. This paper summarizes the work and challenges faced by members of one of the Spring 2020 MBA Capstone classes that began the seven-session semester in early March.

2 THE CLIENT AND THE CONSULTING PROBLEMS

Following online introductions, this Spring 2020 MBA Capstone class began the semester divided into two teams: Evolution Marketing Group and Lions Capital Management. One hour into the first class, the students met two of the founders of the I'm Not Done Yet Foundation. The foundation "helps adolescent and young adult (AYA) patients with cancer and other serious, chronic, and long-term illnesses as they transition from pediatrics to adults" (I'm Not Done Yet Foundation, n.d.-a) and was formed by family members following the death of their son and brother, Bobby Menges. Bobby was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at the age of 5 and was diagnosed with cancer twice more before he passed away at the age of 19 in 2017 (The Garden City News, 2017). Bobby lived a life for others, hosting blood drives, raising money for charities and volunteering his time, and was widely recognized for his service (I'm Not Done Yet Foundation, n.d.-b). He was the epitome of inspiration (I'm Not Done Yet Foundation, n.d.-b) and the reason for the foundation's name.