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Project Title

Addressing the Business Needs of Non-Profits through the Help of the Students In Free Enterprise Program

Project Description

The Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) program, supported through student involvement, will implement business theory toward non-profits and social enterprises in the Manchester, NH area. This will include such tools as business plans (to secure greater funding), marketing plans (to acquire more community recognition), brainstorming techniques (for identifying new activities), and synergistic decision making (for problem solving). The SIFE students will track the results of their input for an unspecified time-period and disseminate their results (impact) to executives in the New England area as part of a regional competition. A survey will be created that will measure the potential quality (pre-test) of recommendations given by SIFE students and the actual quality of recommendations given (post-test).

This project connects to the strategic plan of the University of New Hampshire by meeting four of the five requisites of change. These include a deep commitment to interdisciplinary, a broader definition to scholarship, an enterprising spirit, and flexible allocation of time. Further, the initiative of a learning centered environment applies to this project via learning through engagement and professional experiences.

Background Information/Statement of the Issues/Problems

Many nonprofit organizations have neither the time nor the resources to address many of the issues that relate to their productivity, planning, quality, directing, etc. Further, the students in SIFE need more opportunities to apply their knowledge of business theory and gain business experience in terms of problem solving.

Project Details

The goal of this project will be to address the business needs of the non-profit and the educational needs of the SIFE students (as described above). The methodology to address this goal will include the following process:

1. Identify nonprofit organizations that would be willing to participate in the study. This will be done by examining nonprofit organizations where students have completed internships, reviewing guest speakers who have spoken at UNH Manchester and have come from a non-profit environment, contacting the business program's advisory board for potential non-profit contacts, and discussing with faculty past non-profits they may have associations with.

2. Meet with interested non-profit organizations and explain what SIFE students can and cannot do for them in relation to business problems. Once a good fit has been found, the organizations will be identified to the students.
3. An articulation agreement will be written explaining exactly what the SIFE students will be doing and what, if any, the deliverables will be. The agreement will also indicate the expectations the SIFE program has toward the participating organization.
4. A pre-test will be given to the non-profit indicating what their expectations (in terms of quality and results) are for the services completed by the students. The survey will focus on specific business elements as well tangible deliverables (such as a marketing plan, business plan, employee handbook, etc.)
5. SIFE students will complete the work activity for the non-profit within a four-month period.
6. A post survey will be given to the organization that will indicate the quality of work completed by the students and if expectations were met by the organization.

Expected Impact

The non-profit organization will have their business problem addressed by the SIFE students (in consultation with the SIFE faculty advisor). This impact will be measured by the post survey that will be completed by the organization's management. The SIFE students will learn how theory is applied to a business setting and its impact in terms of results. The students will also gain professional development skills that could not be acquired in the classroom. The impact made by the SIFE students will be measured by the comments given during the SIFE competitions (judges will represent both profit and non-profit organizations).

Scholarly Connection

Pre-test and post-test will be compared to determine if expectations were met. Further, the post-test will ask questions about the quality of the work completed by the students and will give indication into their success/failures in applying theory. This examination will take place for a few years to see if there are any trends. The development of a journal article, directed at business educators, will commence once the data has been acquired and analyzed.

Evaluation Plan

The engaged aspect of this project will be assessed on a client-by-client basis but trends will also be identified through the examination of the post-test. Assessment of the benefit of SIFE students will be determined by the judges during the SIFE competitions at the end of the year. Assessment of the scholarship will be based on the acceptance of peers within an academic journal environment. The communication from the students, the organizations, and the peer review journals will indicate how well this project was mutually beneficial for all.

