

EMBA 529: Nonprofit Board Leadership Seminar

2015-2016 Syllabus

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Lecturer

Credits: 3 (1 Qtr.)

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The Nonprofit Board Leadership Seminar is designed to augment and underpin the Board Fellows Program, which is carried out by the Consulting & Business Development Center at the Michael G. Foster School of Business. Board Fellows are assigned to boards of directors of nonprofit organizations throughout the Seattle area, and serve with those boards for an academic year. The Leadership Seminar is intended to assist the student in maximizing their service to those selected organizations by examining the fundamental responsibilities of board members and the challenges faced by board members during these present times; ways boards shape the organization's strategic direction; ways that board members can strengthen their organization's financial management and stability; and the strengths and limitations of various board governance structures.

The seminar will meet in two-hour blocks twice during the autumn, winter and spring terms. Attendance is required for participants in the Board Fellows program. The length of time of each seminar session will afford the opportunity to present and discuss findings of researchers and practitioners on strategies to achieve board excellence; carry out case examinations of board performance, and, exchange ideas between the instructor and seminar participants about how they can address specific issues pertaining to boards to which they have been assigned.

Among the questions which will receive attention are:

- Are there specific characteristics of high performing boards? How is performance measured or demonstrated? To what extent are boards able to gain and sustain high levels of performance?
- What are the separate performance obligations of boards in the areas of due diligence and financial management? Hiring and supervising executive staff? Determining an organization's long-term strategic direction? Securing additional resources? Seizing upon short-term opportunities?
- Which areas are the greatest challenges faced by boards? What are the specific obstacles to excellence that are encountered, and how are they best addressed?
- What are the additional challenges that have been brought upon by uncertain economic times? How are those challenges being best met?

- What strategic planning techniques can improve board-planning performance? How are planning strategies monitored? How do the principles of strategic thinking reside within a strategic planning framework? What are the specific obstacles to board-led strategic planning and how can they be overcome?
- What governance models are boards operationalizing? Which models match up best to the needs for more financial due diligence? Better planning? Better attraction of new resources?
- In what ways are nonprofit organizations evolving? What are some expectations by funders and others to become more transparent, and what are the best ways to respond to these new expectations?

Requirements for the Course

All students in the class have been assigned to a nonprofit board of directors, and all will be expected to utilize the seminar's discussions and readings to improve their board service. Students will be asked to report their board's progress and raise specific questions about any improvements that may be warranted.

Students from both the Foster School of Business and the Evans School of Public Affairs are participants. They are expected to understand the specific contributions their academic disciplines bring to the efforts to gain board excellence, and to seek new understanding of the contributions made by the other academic discipline present. Readings will be digitalized and will be available at the beginning of the fall term.

Readings: Our major text is *The Nonprofit Board Answer Book 3rd Edition by The Board Source (2011, Joey Bass Publishing)*. Other readings are listed below and on our class website. Readings may be added or substituted.

AUTUMN QUARTER

Session 1: KICKOFF

Friday October 2, 7:30- 9:00 a.m. Anthony's Forum, Dempsey Hall

- Introduction to the program
- Roles and responsibilities of students, organizations and board mentors

All Fellows and Board Mentors must be in attendance

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Session 2: Becoming an Effective Board Leader

Friday October 23, 1:30-3:20 p.m. Paccar Hall 391

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- Board Leadership Expectations and Learning Objectives
- Challenges and Opportunities of Nonprofit Board Leadership (lecture and small group discussion on readings)
- Best Practices on Board Leadership (Q&A with Board Fellow Alumni) Discussion Student Review and reflection of Board Service Practice

Readings:

Board Source (2011). Nonprofit Board Answers Book. Chapters 1-4

Nadler, D. A. (2004). Building better boards. *Harvard Business Review*, [82\(5\),102-105.](#)

[Bowen, W. G. \(1994\).](#)

When a business leader joins a nonprofit board. Harvard Business Review, [72\(5\), 38.](#)

Assignments

1. Readings (*small group critical analysis in class*)
2. *Board leadership expectations and goals survey*
3. Board project draft feedback meeting (Student Schedule Dec 7-11th)
4. Board project proposal (*Due December 18th*)

AUTUMN Quarter Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated by:

Seminar Attendance	30%
Leadership Reflections Journal	20%
Evaluation by Board Mentor	30%
Board Project Proposal (Due December 18th)	<u>20%</u>
TOTAL Autumn Percentage	100%

WINTER QUARTER

Session 3: Strategic Leadership in Nonprofit Boards

Friday January 29, 1:30-3:20 p.m. Paccar Hall 394

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- Discussion of readings

- Student presentation of nonprofit board strategies.
- Panel discussion and Q&A

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Readings

Fisman, R., Khurana, R., & Martenson, E. (2009). Mission-driven governance. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 7(3), 36-43.

Rangan, V. K. (2004). Lofty missions, down-to-earth plans. Harvard Business Review, 82(3), 112-119.

Letts, Christine W. and William P Ryan, et al. High Performance Nonprofit Organizations pp. 1-11, 15-28

Assignment:

1. Readings
2. Feedback on board projects proposals
3. Board service check in with classmates and professor

Session 4: Board Leadership for Financial Strength and Sustainability

March 4, 1:30-3:20 p.m. Paccar Hall 394

- Nonprofit funding models identification and analysis
- Panel on board member fiduciary responsibility
- Student Q & A with panelist on leadership for financial strength and sustainability

Readings

Board Source (2011). Nonprofit Board Answers Book. Chapters 5-8

Foster, W. L., Kim, P., & Christiansen, B. (2009). Ten nonprofit funding

models. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 7(2), 32-39.  

Foster, W. & Bradach, J. (2005). Should Nonprofits Seek Profits? *Harvard*  

Business Review. 83(2) 92-100.  

Assignment

1. Board project Q&A
2. Board service check in and consultations
3. Board project update and consultation

Winter Quarter Evaluation

Students will be evaluated by:

Seminar Attendance	30%
Leadership Reflections Journal	20%
Evaluation by Board Mentor	30%
Board Project Proposal (Board Project Status Report)	<u>20%</u>
TOTAL Winter	100%

SPRING QUARTER

Session 5: Board Leadership for the Future

April 1, 1:30-3:20 p.m. Paccar Hall 391

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- Progress reports on Board Projects
- Panel discussion and Q&A on trends and innovation in the nonprofit sector
- Student Review of Board Progress

Readings

Thurman, R. 2011, Nonprofits Don't Really Care About Diversity, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*
http://ssir.org/articles/entry/nonprofits_dont_really_care_about_diversity (Links to an external site.)

Kaplan, R & Grossman, A. 2010 The Emerging Capital Markets for Nonprofits. Harvard Business Review. 
[HBR_The-Emerging-Capital-Market-for-Non-profits.pdf](#) 

<http://myadvantage.com.au/getattachment/bf5ce6da-d215-47e8-8bbb-48ce29426eb5/The-Emerging-Capital-Market-for-Non-profits.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Session 6: Board Project Presentations Feedback Session and Wrap-Up

April 15, 1:30-3:20 p.m. Paccar Hall 391

- Student Project Presentations and Feedback Session
- Course Evaluation and Feedback Surveys
- Defining Next Steps in Board Leadership Journey

Readings

TBD based on topics of interest from the class.

Assignments

1. Report summarizing experience as a Board Fellow
2. Board Project: Submit board project presentation, (format will vary depending on the project but please submit all relevant PowerPoints, written reports, or research/data analysis you conducted for your board-level project.)

Spring Quarter Evaluation

Students will be evaluated by:

Seminar Attendance	20%
Leadership Reflections Journal	20%
Evaluation by Board Mentor	20%
Board Project Presentation	<u>40%</u>
TOTAL Spring	100%

Participation: Students are expected to attend board meetings, all seminars, do the assigned reading in advance of class, and participate in class & small group discussions and exercises. Course format will include lecture, class and small group discussion. It is hoped that a tone of open discussion will be maintained throughout the course. Participation and preparation are evaluated in class. If you must miss class, please

notify your instructor before class if possible. It is the student's responsibility to negotiate a plan for making up any missed class participation.

Instructor: Ivan Barron: Students may seek assistance from Instructor Ivan Barron at ibarron@uw.edu or Keisha Jackson at lnjacks@uw.edu. Additionally, in-person meetings may be scheduled via email or telephone **Mentor/Keisha Jackson:** Keisha will be the primary contact with mentors and communicate on a quarterly basis. Mentors will be responsible for providing Keisha feedback regarding the fellow's board attendance and performance.

BOARD PROJECT

The project should leverage your skills and knowledge to gain specific expertise on at least one aspect of the nonprofit while addressing a critical need of the Board. This project should be approved by your board and the instructor prior to beginning the project. This project should involve the collaboration of nonprofit board members. It is estimated the project will take between 40-50 hours.

Each nonprofit organization is asked to identify projects based on the board's needs. After the Fellow is placed the feasibility of the project should be weighed based on the Fellow's background and expertise and an appropriate project that can be completed in six months should be agreed upon. A good project will be one that is important to the board of directors, uses the Fellow's skills and furthers the work of a board committee or the board as a whole.

When selecting a project consider the following:

- Is the topic of the project important to the board of directors?
- The project must be board-level. *This is not the type of project that could be assigned to an intern at the organization to assist management (i.e., marketing plan design, financial audit, staff evaluations etc.).*
- Will the results be discussed and used by the board?
- Is it clearly defined, have a beginning and an end, and agreed upon by the mentor, the CEO and the Fellow?
- Is it strategic in nature?
- Does the project use the Fellow's experience and expertise?

The topic and scope of the project should be finalized by December 18th 2015 and agreed upon by the nonprofit board. The Fellow and their board mentor should communicate regularly (*suggest a meeting schedule*) about the project progress and to be sure the Fellow has access to all the resources necessary.

BOARD PROJECT CHECK Updates

Prior to the due date of the Board Project Proposal, all students will set up a meeting to discuss their intended project. Below are the guidelines for these call.

1. The first update meeting will take the form of a conference call that will take place during the week of Dec. 7-11 (if you need to have a meeting at an earlier date, please contact the instructor).
2. The phone call should last no more than 30 minutes and include you, your Board Fellow colleague (if applicable), your Board mentor, and your staff liaison (Ivan or Keisha according to the list below).
3. During the call you will present your draft proposal for this project (submit this draft to all the parties before the call) and get feedback to strengthen your final proposal due on December 18th. 2015
4. Schedule your phone calls as soon as possible by initiating an email between the parties listed above.

Below is a listing of the non-profit partners and the appropriate staff liaison who will work with you on providing feedback on your project.

Staff liaison – Keisha:

1. Child Care Resources
2. Coyote Central
3. Equal Rights WA Edu Fund
4. Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center
5. Page Ahead Children’s Literacy Program
6. Planned Parenthood
7. ROOTS
8. Seafair Foundation
9. Smilow Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club of King County
10. TeamChild
11. Town Hall Seattle
12. YWCA Seattle King Snohomish

Staff liaison – Ivan:

1. Boyer Children’s Clinic
2. Center For Human Services
3. City Fruit
4. EarthCorps
5. GSBA
6. Islandwood
7. Rotary First Harvest
8. Salish Sea Expeditions
9. Seattle Tilth
10. The Mountaineers
11. Tiny Trees Preschool
12. Washington DECA
13. Nature Consortium

Other calls will take place as the project progresses to ensure it is being completed in a satisfactory manner for all parties.

The Fellow should present project findings to the nonprofit board before their term ends in whatever format is most appropriate given the nature of the project (PowerPoint, written report, oral presentation, etc.).

BOARD LEADERSHIP REFLECTIONS JOURNAL

A central component of getting the most from your board experience is learning from the challenges of this new role. To support you in this effort, you will be asked to submit entries of your learning into a Board Leadership Reflection Journal. The instructor will provide you the guiding questions for these entries which will be due on the following dates. You will submit these into the class Canvas site.

November 20th

January 28th

February 26th

April 8th