

## MGMT 579 – Strategic Consulting Practicum

## Course Syllabus

*Summer 2020 – June 22 to August 28***Instructor**

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**Office Hours**

Tuesdays & Thursdays  
12:00 to 2:00pm

**Class Sessions**

Wednesdays  
5:30 to 7:00pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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**Objectives:** This course offers a practical “learning by doing” experience where students apply concepts, tools, and frameworks from their MBA studies to the complex, multi-disciplinary, real-world challenges and opportunities faced by companies. Insights gleaned from the practical application of students’ skills and knowledge to business scenarios can generate significant value for stakeholders.

**Materials:** There are no required textbooks or course packs. This project-based course is driven by execution of the agreed scope, communication of progress and submission of deliverables. All guidance, templates and related materials will be available on Canvas.

**Method of Instruction:** This applied learning course is purposefully designed to differ from other core curriculum in the Foster MBA Program experience to support the unique goals of this course. Responsibility for structuring work on the project and the learning experience shifts substantially to the individual and student teams. To succeed, students must:

- Demonstrate both a tolerance for ambiguity in the face of often unstructured challenges and an inventiveness in assembling resources that are not common to other courses.
- Use their skills, knowledge, and experience to think critically and creatively to achieve organizational objectives as articulated by the sponsoring organization.
- Engage the instructor, MBA Consulting Program staff, and others in their own network and the Foster network to help drive the project to a successful conclusion.
- Seek support and advice as soon as possible rather than waiting until the last minute when risks or issues that arise.
- Work professionally, insightfully, and creatively in completing the project, conducting themselves with the integrity and respect consistent with the outstanding culture of the Foster MBA Program.

**Commitment:** This course is unlike any other in the Foster MBA program in that most class sessions are to be used to continue the execution of the project scope by conducting research and analysis as a team and individually, meeting with project sponsors, and interacting with the faculty instructor. The following is required for all students:

- **Consulting best practices class session.** Understand the expectations of project execution and discuss tips to achieve project success.
- **Project kickoff.** Meet with your sponsor and agree on the project scope, approach, plan and evaluation metrics.
- **Project scope and approach check-in.** Review your Scope & Approach document and discuss the Memorandum of Understanding with the instructor.
- **Communication best practices class session.** Understand your audience and find the most effective and impactful way to share your message.
- **Mid-project status check-in.** Present your draft mid-project status update to the instructor for feedback in advance of presenting to your sponsor.
- **Practice mock presentation.** Present your draft findings and recommendations to the instructor for feedback in advance of your final presentation to your sponsor.
- **12-16 hours project execution per week, on average.** Interface with your sponsor, work with your team, communicate with the instructor, and make progress on against your project plan.

**Honor Code & Professional Conduct:** The course involves substantial interaction with stakeholders outside Foster, and the expectation is that students conduct themselves in the highest professional manner. Previous students have suggested success in this dimension is possible to the extent that students treat the project less like a traditional course and more like a job. That is, show up on time and prepared, keep the sponsor and other stakeholders informed, and deliver as promised.

- If conducting research with third parties, students must represent themselves as a Foster MBA student team working on a class project on behalf of a company client.
- It is an accepted practice in market research to not disclose the specific identity of the represented client if doing so would introduce bias into the data collected. Instead students can describe the sponsor's industry.
- The expectation is to employ the principles and procedures espoused by the Foster MBA Honor Code to maintain academic integrity in the course and project deliverables. While all aspects of the Honor Code apply to the course, the fundamental issue faced in this course involves proper attribution of source material for the deliverables.

## **COURSE CREDIT**

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Student performance in the course is evaluated by the instructor on a "Credit/No Credit" basis and will be judged on the investment in course assignments and how well the ultimate project deliverables align with the agreed scope, goals, plan and metrics.

- Consideration will be given to the perspectives offered by the sponsor; however, the instructor will retain sole responsibility for making the final decision on course credit.
- It is the instructor's expectation that each participant in the course demonstrate sufficient competency and mastery of content to earn "Credit". However, the instructor will exercise "No Credit" if students choose to pursue a path that does not create value for themselves, their team or the sponsoring organization.
- Explanations of each assignment, including instructor expectations, format, length, etc., will be provided. The relative weighting of each of the evaluation dimensions and the submission mode—team or individual—are given below. If submission requirements are unclear after viewing the assignment, please contact the instructor for clarification.

### Minimum requirements for credit:

- Attend all scheduled class sessions, the project kickoff and the check-in meetings.
- Attend the agreed cadence of student team and sponsor meetings to contribute to the development and delivery of assignments and sponsor deliverables.
- Participate in the mid-project, practice and final presentations.
- Complete all team assignments on-time and in accordance with instructions.

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GUIDANCE

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Assignment	Due Date	Weight
1 Team Bio & Email	June 26, 2020	5%
2 Preliminary Scope & Approach	June 30, 2020	5%
3 Memorandum of Understanding	July 2, 2020	5%
4 Research Plan & Timeline	July 10, 2020	10%
5 Mid-Project Status Update	July 24, 2020	15%
6 Draft Deliverable & Practice Presentation	August 14, 2020	20%
7 Final Deliverable & Presentation	August 28, 2020	35%

*\*Assignments are due 24-hours prior to meetings with the instructor and sponsor, as applicable.*

**Guidance:** Prior experience suggests the final presentation is a critical determinant used by the sponsors in assessing how well teams met the project objectives and achieved the scope expectations. Guidelines for assignments and deliverables are available on Canvas and are provided in a way that should impose minimal additional burdens upon the student team beyond the completion of the project itself. Contact the instructor if further support is needed.

**Non-Disclosure Agreements:** Because of the special nature of this course, students may be provided access to certain non-public or otherwise confidential information. **Students are expected to keep all such information confidential in accord with the objectives and**

**expectations of the company sponsor.** This extends to all interactions with those outside your team, e.g., do not discuss the project specifics with students on other teams or any other parties not involved in the project. Students may be asked to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) before the sponsor will share data and information.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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Students are expected to reserve the class time allotted to work on their projects as a team. The instructor reserves the right to meet with teams or individual students during the allotted class time. Each team will sign up for the check-in meetings, practice presentations, and final presentation, in the given available time slots. Everything noted in the schedule is mandatory.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Details</b>
<i>Once project and team has been assigned</i>	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Begin learning about the sponsoring company, relevant industry, and project scope topic. Establish the means to keep apprised of any major happenings with the company and industry throughout the project duration.</i>
June 26	<b>Assignment #1</b> Team Introduction & Bios	<b>Prepare:</b> Create team bios (use template provided). <b>Communicate:</b> Send an intro email with the one-page team bio and explanation of immediate next steps.
June 24	<b>Class Session #1</b> Consulting Best Practices	Virtual Zoom Session, 5:30 – 7:00pm
June 30	<b>Assignment #2</b> Preliminary Scope & Approach	<b>Draft:</b> Document the preliminary scope and approach, leveraging the using the project description and details provided in the sponsor proposal.
July 1	<b>Class Session #2</b> Project Kickoff	Virtual Zoom Session, 5:30 – 7:00pm <b>Kickoff Luncheon:</b> All group introductions, project overview and expectations, and lunch. Followed by breakout working sessions with sponsors. <b>Breakout Sessions:</b> Meet as separate teams with project sponsors to agree the preliminary project scope, approach and high-level timeline. Define next steps/actions required to move the project forward.
July 2	<b>Assignment #3</b> Memorandum of Understanding	<b>Draft:</b> MOU documenting the agree scope, approach and timeline for written agreement with the sponsor.
July 6 to 10	<b>Check-in #1</b> Scope & Approach	<b>Prepare:</b> Sign-up for 30-minute meeting with instructor. <b>Meeting:</b> Review scope, approach, timeline and MOU.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Details</b>
July 10	<b>Assignment #4</b> Research Plan & Timeline	<b>Draft:</b> Create a plan documenting the activities and timeline to complete the project within the course duration, to be used for tracking and measuring success.
July 15	<b>Class Session #3</b> Communication Best Practices	Virtual Zoom Session, 5:30 – 7:00pm
July 24	<b>Assignment #5</b> Mid-Project Status Update	<b>Draft:</b> Presentation describing accomplishments to-date, preliminary findings and observations, and activities to be completed and by when to successfully complete the project.
July 20 to 31	<b>Check-in #2</b> Mid-Project Status Update	<b>Prepare:</b> Sign-up for 30-minute meeting with instructor. <b>Meeting:</b> Review draft mid-project status update.
July 27 to 31	<b>Sponsor Meeting</b>	<b>Present:</b> Mid-Project Status Update
August 14	<b>Assignment #6</b> Draft Deliverable & Presentation	<b>Draft:</b> Minimum 70% complete draft deliverable and presentation describing the research conducted, findings, observations, and recommendations.
Aug 10 to 14	<b>Check-in #3</b> Practice Presentation	<b>Prepare:</b> Sign-up for 60-minute meeting with instructor. <b>Meeting:</b> Present mock presentation of draft findings, observations and recommendations.
Aug 24 to 28	<b>Assignment #7</b> Final Deliverable & Presentation	<b>Prepare:</b> Update the final deliverable and presentation with instructor feedback received from practice session. <b>Meeting:</b> Conduct final presentation with sponsor and deliver final report.

\* Students are responsible for scheduling meetings with the sponsors for time that work for all stakeholders.