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CONTENT & OPINIONS

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FROM THE EDITOR

Business Law and Ethics: Foundational to Business Education

Business law and ethics continue to be relevant and necessary components of business education. Knowledge and understanding of business law and ethics is foundational to business education and for all business professionals as they perform their work. An absence or a disregard law and ethics can undermine excellence in other areas of a business, resulting in scandals at the least, and potentially the end of the business from legal judgments and bankruptcy.

Interest in business law has been consistent over the years, and attention to business ethics has increasingly been emphasized since the Enron fraud and demise in 2001. Substantial increases in litigation threats and costs, in addition to the rise of emotional and unpredictable social media campaigns and controversies, make these disciplines more important than ever.

This journal is a vehicle for the sharing of teaching information and excellence, as well as a venue for sharing and archiving valuable and relevant pedagogical ideas, research, and analysis. The quality of the articles is high, and the dedication and hard work of our authors, editors, and reviewers is outstanding.

This issue includes four articles worthy of your consideration. First, Professor Nancy White shares a legal analysis template to help students break down law into elements, and then add them to the template for the purpose of applying the law to factual situations in order to reach a legal conclusion. She generously includes a wealth of examples for each step along the way.

In the second article, Professor Rachel Spooner shares her intriguing ethics service-learning project, "Do Better, Be Better." The project includes concepts and tools important in business education today – corporate social responsibility, experiential learning, and service learning. This project is particularly valuable because it can be incorporated into a variety of business classes across the business curriculum. Her detailed explanations and experience-tested development facilitate easy implementation.

Next, Professor Sandra Benson utilizes a courtroom simulation exercise to strengthen business law knowledge and to help students develop critical thinking skills, communication skills, and civility when dealing with differing perspectives. This classroom-tested experiential learning exercise includes detailed instructions, as well as feedback from students and evidence of student learning.

Finally, Professor Daniel Herron studies the ethical concept of stakeholder theory and explains how the theory can be used as a basis for collaborative decision-making in the business world. This excellent in-depth analysis connects the theoretical ethical concepts to government's legal regulations and alternative dispute resolution.

As these papers illustrate, this journal successfully provides strong and valuable educational innovation for business law and ethics disciplines to benefit students, educators, the business community, and society as a whole.

Linda Christiansen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

The Do Better, Be Better Project: Teaching Corporate Responsibility and Social Justice Through Experience

Rachel Spooner*

ABSTRACT

Business schools typically teach corporate responsibility through academic theory or case studies; yet, many business schools acknowledge the value of experiential learning and express a desire to move away from the traditional lecture and case study pedagogies. This article describes an innovative and ambitious project that teaches the lessons of corporate responsibility and social justice through experience. The Do Better, Be Better Project combines the pedagogical benefits of experiential learning, service learning, and self-guided projects. Uniquely, the Do Better, Be Better Project brings alumni into the classroom by assigning every student (or team) an alumni advisor. While many pedagogies exist that yield one of these benefits, very few accomplish so many goals in one project. During the Do Better, Be Better Project, students spend a semester creating positive change on an issue about which they care deeply, offering opportunities to create knowledge through experience and reflection. This article discusses the pedagogical benefits of using experiential and service learning to teach corporate responsibility and social justice, the value of self-guided projects for business students, and the benefits created by engaging alumni in a substantive classroom project. Finally, this article provides detailed instructions on how to use the Do Better, Be Better Project in a business school classroom.

KEY WORDS: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY; EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING; SERVICE LEARNING; ALUMNI; ALUMNI RELATIONS; BUSINESS ETHICS; BUSINESS LAW; ETHICS; REFLECTION; SELF-GUIDED PROJECTS; CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY; SOCIAL JUSTICE

I. Introduction

Discussion of corporate social responsibility has become *de rigueur* in business schools. Most business school students in the United States learn about Patagonia's commitment to the environment, Ikea's fight against child labor, or Ben & Jerry's social justice efforts. More recently, business schools have been revising syllabi to include discussion of "case studies ripped from the headlines" regarding the #MeToo movement, the corporate reaction to the controversy over kneeling during the national anthem in the NFL and the "bro" culture at Uber.^{1,2} As I incorporated case studies and discussion regarding corporate responsibility and justice into my classes, I found students were either cynical about corporate efforts or were satisfied with congratulating a business for doing good. Wanting to solicit more critical thought, I created the Do Better, Be Better³ Project ("DBBB Project") to communicate the lessons of corporate responsibility and social justice through experience.

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¹ David Gelles & Claire Cain Miller, *Business Schools Now Teaching #MeToo, NFL Protests, and Trump*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 25 2017), <https://nyti.ms/2pvUD1F>.

²For an example of lesson plans surrounding #MeToo, see Natalie Proulx, et al. *The Reckoning: Teaching About the #MeToo Moment and Sexual Harassment with Resources from the New York Times*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 25, 2018), <https://nyti.ms/2FdqtDk>.

³ Full credit for the *Do Better, Be Better* title goes to Professor Tony Brown at Duke University. Professor Brown's Duke Leadership Accelerator, an innovative model of alumni and student engagement, uses the motto "Do Better, Be Better." I'd also like to thank my former colleague Laura P. Hartman for introducing me to the values of using service projects in a business ethics class.

The DBBB Project is an experiential learning project that asks students to focus on social justice issues and the process of making positive social change. I used the DBBB Project in *Business, Justice and Responsibility*, a business law and ethics elective for undergraduates.⁴ This course is an elective offered through the Business Law Concentration. Its only prerequisite is the *Introduction to Business Law* course required of all undergraduate business majors. The goal of the course is to examine contemporary social issues through the lenses of both law and ethics. The DBBB Project could be easily adapted for any business ethics, law, leadership, social entrepreneurship, or organizational behavior course at the undergraduate or graduate level. Rather than just learning about leaders and businesses that make a positive impact on the world, the assignment asks students to *be better by doing better*. The emphasis of the assignment is on benefits created. Students identify a problem, challenge, or social justice issue that they can benefit through a semester-long project.

The strong emphasis of the DBBB Project is action. The key to the assignment is finding an issue about which the student cares deeply. The project is assessed based upon the quality and quantity of benefits created, the explanation of why students chose the project, the amount they learned about the issue(s), and their reflection on how the work changed their perspectives on business and leaders. The project has a myriad of learning goals, ranging from understanding the nature of our demands on companies and leaders when we develop expectations of corporate social responsibility, to learning the role of failure in success. Unique aspects of the project include its self-guided nature and the use of alumni advisors.

The DBBB Project is almost entirely self-guided. Students choose whether to work alone or with a team, the issue on which they will work, how to create benefits, and what work to do. The self-guided nature of the project can be invigorating and inspiring for some students and anxiety-inducing for others.

Alumni are an underutilized resource in most classrooms. Based on my own alumni experience, I suspected that alumni would prefer to engage with students and faculty on a substantive project rather than merely at a cocktail reception. The alumni included in the Millennial Generation have shown a strong commitment to community service.⁵ This trend is likely to continue, as evidenced by Generation Z⁶ students' commitment to volunteerism in their teen years.⁷ Bringing together alumni interest in substantive engagement with a commitment to service, alumni volunteer to advise students on DBBB Projects. The alumni engagement on this project has been a great success, creating benefits for students, the university, faculty, the alumni, and the community.

The DBBB Project is a rare assignment that brings together the benefits of experiential learning, service learning, self-guided assignments, and alumni in the classroom. While many business school classes use one of these pedagogies, this article will highlight the value of bringing them all together. In Part II, this article will discuss the benefits of experiential learning in a business ethics course. Part III will highlight how business ethics professors can use service learning outside of a course devoted entirely to service, but still obtain the benefits thereof. Part IV will discuss the value and challenge in a self-guided project for undergraduates. Part V will discuss the rarely acknowledged value of bringing alumni into the classroom, while Part VI will detail how to use the DBBB Project in your classroom. Finally, Part VII will conclude with lessons learned from years of implementation of the DBBB Project.

II. The Benefits of Experiential Learning in Business Ethics

Experiential learning about social justice and corporate social responsibility is a powerful response to the cynicism and skepticism that greet most case studies and class discussions on these topics. From many years of teaching corporate social responsibility, I found that students either believe that companies are motivated by reputational benefits or students merely accept as fact that some "good" businesses exist but that these businesses are different. Experiencing the work of social change brings it to life, moving social justice and responsibility from an abstract concept implemented by large corporations to work done by individuals.

⁴ I taught the Business, Justice and Responsibility course while teaching at Questrom School of Business at Boston University from September, 2005-June, 2019. All details about the course and curriculum refer to Questrom.

⁵ Connie Cass, *Young Generation No Slouches At Volunteering*, ASSOC. PRESS (Dec. 29, 2014), www.lowellsun.com/breakingnews/ci_27221729/young-generation-no-slouches-at-volunteering.

⁶ Generation Z is commonly defined as individuals born after 1995. *Id.*

⁷ As of 2017, 26% of 16 to 19-year old individuals volunteered on a regular basis. *Getting Gen Z Primed to Save the World*, THE ATLANTIC (sponsored by Allstate), www.theatlantic.com/sponsored/allstate/getting-gen-z-primed-to-save-the-world/747/ (last visited Sept. 24, 2018).

The benefits of experiential learning are well established. Studies demonstrate that students retain material longer, are more actively involved, and enjoy learning more when experiential pedagogy is used.⁸ Kolb's experiential learning theory describes how knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.⁹ Students have a concrete experience such as encountering a new situation through the experiential assignment. Afterwards, students reflect on that experience, creating opportunities to draw conclusions and lessons from their work.¹⁰ The lessons learned from reflection may give rise to a new idea or a new way of viewing an older idea. These new ideas allow students to experiment and try new things, which brings them back to concrete action (and the start of the learning cycle).¹¹ The current Gen Z students in college embrace interactive, immersive learning. In a survey to determine how this new generation will change education, 51% of surveyed (Gen Z) students said they learn best by doing.¹²

Kolb's experiential learning theory is effective in business education. In identifying key features of an ideal MBA curricula, Peter Navarro, business professor at University of California – Irvine, listed experiential learning, noting that a reduction in “talk and chalk” pedagogy has benefits such as real-world problem solving and student-centered learning.¹³ This is truer in business ethics, as ethics is an active discipline. In a study of the use of placements of students with social enterprises for externships, authors found positive learning opportunities for business students through exposure to individuals dedicated to social change.¹⁴ The social entrepreneurs became role models for the business students, as they defied the stereotypes of ruthless and amoral business managers.¹⁵

The DBBB Project has all of these benefits of experiential learning. Students are more engaged and interested in learning about social change and responsibility when they are doing the work rather than just reading about it. The projects usually lead students to work with non-profit partners, student groups, university administration, and other individuals who are committed to a particular social issue. These interactions lead to the creation of role models for students who may otherwise view business leaders as ruthless competitors. The DBBB Project's use of experiential pedagogy is an effective method for allowing students to draw their own lessons, through the Kolb Learning Cycle, on the role of business in effecting social change.

III. Service Learning Allows Business Students to Develop Skills and Sensitivity

The DBBB Project is an opportunity for service learning. Service learning is a teaching method that integrates community service with academic study.¹⁶ Service learning benefits students, the community, and the university. Students develop “soft skills” such as “effective teamwork, cross functional flexibility, interpersonal and communication skills, and multicultural sensitivity.”¹⁷ Service learning projects in business schools have the specific benefit of allowing students to apply the business skills developed in their classes to social problems.¹⁸ For example, many DBBB Projects have

⁸ Ronald R. Sims, *Business Ethics Teaching for Effective Learning*, 6 TEACHING BUSINESS ETHICS 393-410, 399 (2002).

⁹ DAVID A. KOLB, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: EXPERIENCE AS THE SOURCE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT 38 (1984).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Sieva Kozinsky, *How Generation Z is Shaping The Change In Education*, FORBES (July 24, 2017), www.forbes.com/sites/sievakozinsky/2017/07/24/how-generation-z-is-shaping-the-change-in-education/#6e33db396520.

¹³ Peter Navarro *The MBA Core Curricula of Top-Ranked U.S. Business Schools: A Study in Failure?*, 7 ACAD. MGMT. LEARNING & EDUC. 108-23 (2008).

¹⁴ Denise Baden & Carole Parkes, *Experiential Learning: Inspiring the Business Leaders of Tomorrow*, 32 J. MGMT. DEV. 295-308 (2013).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Not every DBBB Project involves service in the traditional sense of volunteering at a non-profit organization.

¹⁷ Debbie Easterling & Frederica Rudell, 73 *Rationale, Benefits, and Methods of Service-Learning in Marketing Education* J. EDUC. BUS. 58-61 (1997), quoting Edward Zlotkowski, *Opportunity For All: Linking Service-Learning and Business Education*, 15 J. BUS. ETHICS 5-19 (1996).

¹⁸ *Id.*

students creating marketing materials or databases for non-profit organizations. These projects provide practice for students but also create meaning as students see the value of their business skills in the social justice world.

The focus of the DBBB Project is creating benefits for a specific social issue.¹⁹ Students are assessed on whether they have made measurable progress on the issue they chose to address. Measurable progress is defined as benefits a student can quantify. It varies by project, but examples of such quantifiable benefits include:

- increased awareness of the benefits of cochlear implants for the hearing impaired, measured by views of an online public service announcement and active commentary on a Facebook page created to debate the issue;
- pounds of produce picked and distributed to homeless shelters and soup kitchens;
- number of attendees at a speaker event created to encourage women to enter the tech industry;
- repairs completed on sailboats at a community boating center that provides sailing lessons to underprivileged children; and
- bags of recycling collected in a dormitory.

In a more typical service-learning course, students are asked to volunteer for a certain number of hours for a community organization. Although this time may be beneficial for the community organization and the student, hosting students for a certain number of hours can create frustrating extra work for the community organizations.²⁰ The DBBB Project aims to avoid that frustration by incentivizing students to work to create measurable positive change on an issue rather than to just serve an organization on an hourly basis. By assessing students based on benefits created rather than hours served, the focus of the DBBB Project remains on the issue served.

Service learning projects such as the DBBB Project also create benefits for a university by providing a vehicle to “walk the talk” on ethics. As many business schools position themselves as focused on “the triple bottom line” of business ethics,²¹ service-learning projects help schools demonstrate commitment to their communities.²² The DBBB Project gets students into the community, essentially walking the talk of a school’s commitment to ethics. Faculty benefit from increased engagement, motivated students, and the ability to facilitate rather than merely deliver content.²³ The DBBB Project is a method for incorporating the benefits of service learning in the context of a broader course. As one former student put it, “The Do Better, Be Better project made me think more deeply about my community. As an undergraduate, it is common to live each day thinking about the next assignment, the next test, or the next presentation. But thinking outside these parameters and considering how I may make a difference to my community, a fellow student, or a faculty member is really rewarding.”²⁴

IV. Embracing the Freedom of a Self-Guided Project

The DBBB Project is self-guided. Faculty do not create checklists or rubrics in a traditional sense. Students are responsible for their own project management within the structure of a few deliverables throughout the semester. Over many semesters and hundreds of students, every project has been different. I start the semester by telling students that the DBBB Project allows them to receive credit for doing something they want to do anyway. Their project is working on something about which they care deeply, which allows for intrinsic motivation.²⁵

¹⁹ Students are encouraged to think broadly when defining their issue, so that they can be flexible in their planning and overcome obstacles. Examples of issues are homelessness, building community between faculty and students, supporting gender fluid students, or highlighting women of color in power in business.

²⁰ Stephanie Strom, *Does Service Learning Really Help?*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 29, 2009), <https://nyti.ms/2jOx5Aq>.

²¹ The “Triple Bottom Line” is a concept created in 1994 by John Elkington, the founder of a British consultancy called SustainAbility. Elkington advocated that companies should account for three bottom lines: profit, people, and planet. John Elkington, *Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-Win-Win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development*, 36 CALIF. MGMT. REV. 90–100 (1994).

²² Paul C. Godfrey, Louise M. Illes, Gregory R. Berry, et al., *Creating Breadth in Business Education through Service-Learning*, 4 ACAD. MGMT. LEARNING & EDUC. 309-323, 318 (Sept. 2005) (discussing the principle of reciprocity of service learning, and how it creates mutual respect and learning between community partners and students).

²³ Richard R. Klink & Gerald A. Athaide, *Implementing Service Learning in the Principles of Marketing Course*, 26 J. MKT. EDUC. 145-153, 146 (Aug. 2004).

²⁴ Comment by student who completed her DBBB Project in the spring semester 2017.

²⁵ The DBBB Project allows for autonomy and purpose, two key characteristics of intrinsic motivation. DANIEL PINK, *DRIVE: THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US* (2009).

Self-guided projects create uncertainty for some students. Alumni advisors serve an important role in reassuring students throughout the semester. Many have completed DBBB Projects while they were students and can attest to the learning that takes place over the entirety of the semester. Advisors encourage students to take the long view; long-term thinking is important to acting ethically,²⁶ thus long-term orientation plays a key role in connecting the DBBB Project to corporate social responsibility and ethical business. I also emphasize the importance of failure in the project. The assignment notes that failure is expected, and alumni of the project speak to the class about their own failures. Half of a student's DBBB Project grade is based on their reflection paper about how they are "Being Better" as a result of their work. It turns out that failures are wonderful fodder for reflection.

V. The Benefits of Bringing Alumni into the Classroom

The DBBB Project is a unique and effective way to build relationships with alumni. College and graduate programs are extremely expensive, and the speed of technological advances means that many skills become obsolete quickly.²⁷ As a result, many universities are aspiring to a model of lifelong learning, where students can return to the university as their needs change. As Professor Chris Dellarocas²⁸ notes, "a university's strongest asset is the deep bond that we form with our students."²⁹ I would extend that idea to the bond we form with our alumni – and between our alumni and students. Universities, faculty, alumni, and students are all stronger if we build these relationships.

The engagement of alumni in the DBBB Project works because it is mutually beneficial. Students benefit from alumni advisors' advice and guidance, as well as relationships built. Alumni also find the work rewarding. Given their interest in service and corporate social responsibility, the alumni are excited to be a part of the social change projects.³⁰ For young alumni, they have the opportunity to be a mentor early in their careers.

There are many benefits to a university of continued engagement of alumni. Seeing undergraduate education as transactional – the delivery of content to students in exchange for credits and degrees – makes the university "vulnerable to disruption."³¹ To provide lifelong learning, undergraduate education needs to create new and varied opportunities for alumni engagement. The DBBB Project is a good example of a substantive classroom project that provides meaningful engagement for alumni with little or no cost. It is also flexible enough to engage alumni around the world, as the advising can take place remotely via videoconference.

VI. Putting Together the Do Better, Be Better Project

The DBBB Project may appear complex because it involves student teams and alumni, every project is different, and it lasts the entire semester. It uses relatively little precious classroom time, however. The entire project can be completed in two to three one-hour class sessions over the semester, plus a longer session for final presentations. A sample of the assignment is attached as Appendix A. Classroom time is utilized for an overview of the assignment with former students and advisors, "DBBB Speed Dating" (explained below), a mid-semester progress report, and final presentations.

Choosing their Issue

The first and most important step in the DBBB Project is for students to choose an issue on which to work. Students can do the project alone or with a team. There is value in either choice, but the essential question is whether the team of students agree on a worthy project.

²⁶ Jennifer L. Nevins, William O. Bearden, Bruce Money, et al., *Ethical Values and Long-Term Orientation* 71 J. BUS. ETHICS 261-74 (2007).

²⁷ Chris Dellarocas, *Higher Education in a World Where Students Never Graduate*, INSIDE HIGHER ED. (Aug. 1, 2018), www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/views/2018/08/01/role-university-world-where-students-never-graduate-opinion.

²⁸ Chrysanthos Dellarocas is Associate Provost for Digital Learning & Innovation and Richard C. Shipley is Professor of Management in the Department of Information Systems in the Questrom School of Business.

²⁹ Dellarocas, *supra* note 27.

³⁰ Jeanne Meister, *The Future of Work: Corporate Social Responsibility Attracts Top Talent*, FORBES (June 7, 2012), www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2012/06/07/the-future-of-work-corporate-social-responsibility-attracts-top-talent/#3e855a13f954 (discussing trends in millennial workers).

³¹ Dellarocas, *supra* note 27.

For many students the open-ended nature of this project is intimidating. To facilitate choice of an issue, students complete a questionnaire for homework. It asks students to reflect on the current events to which they pay attention, the community service they have completed, and the changes they would like to see in the world, their communities, and their school. It asks questions such as, "It is 2 am and I am talking to my friends about ..." or "If I had \$500,000 to spend to help the world, what would I do?" The questionnaire is attached as Appendix B.

Following administration of the questionnaire, about an hour of class time is used on an activity called "DBBB Speed Dating." DBBB Speed Dating allows students to identify the issues that matter to them and to find other students with similar interests with whom they might work. Students work in groups and are asked to discuss their answers for one of the questions on the questionnaire. After a few minutes, a buzzer sounds and half of the group must rotate to the next table. Then, the groups discuss a different question from the questionnaire. This repeats for about an hour, concluding with a few minutes of free time to start forming groups. DBBB Speed Dating is a fun and lively session. In addition to helping students brainstorm and find teams, it is a great opportunity to create a strong classroom culture and build friendships.³² By the end of DBBB Speed Dating, students will have identified the issue or topic that they hope to work on for the semester. Examples of such issues include the following: homelessness in Boston, helping students of the Jewish faith connect with business leaders who share their faith, reducing Islamophobia on campus, and increasing recycling on campus. Next, students must define their project work on that issue.

Project Work

There is no typical DBBB Project. Students are initially asked to identify an issue or challenge, not a plan for a project. The ability to pivot throughout the semester is what differentiates the DBBB Project from typical service learning assignments. Although some students choose to do service, many projects take very different forms. As long as there is active, measurable progress on the issue, the DBBB Project is considered a success. Although some of the learning goals of this assignment are related to corporate social responsibility, students need not take on a huge societal issue. Many projects focus on challenges within their university. For example, one project focused on the high cost of being a college student in Boston. It culminated in the creation of a guide to being thrifty in Boston, which detailed restaurants, cultural events, museums, and other forms of entertainment that are discounted for students. Other projects focus on issues important to a student's family, such as fundraising for cancer research when the student's family has been impacted by cancer. Students must remain active for the entire semester to make positive change; many teams do multiple projects on a single issue within a semester. Failure is considered part of this assignment, and students face many obstacles. It is rare that students complete their original vision for a project. There is powerful learning in that failure, especially for students who are accustomed to measuring success in terms of following specific instructions.

The following are examples of DBBB Projects:

- A student wanted to highlight success stories of women of color in business. She located women to interview, and created a powerful video called *About Time*.³³ The video resulted in an invitation for the student to the Clinton Global Initiative University Conference in 2018.
- In 2015, a team of students wanted to make Questrom School of Business a more inclusive place for transgender students and those who define themselves outside of binary gender. They convinced the administration to create the school's first gender neutral bathroom.³⁴
- A student concerned about hunger spent the semester volunteering at a farm that collects so-called "ugly" produce and donates it to food pantries and shelters in Boston. He picked produce for many hours on a weekly basis and learned about how hunger impacts our city.

³² It turns out that college students usually do not make friends on teams and suffer from loneliness at high rates. Rachel Simmons, *Why are young adults the loneliest generation in America?*, WASH. POST (May 3, 2018), www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2018/05/03/why-are-young-adults-the-loneliest-generation-in-america/?utm_term=.fd7bb856dc2e. One student wrote in her reflection paper that the DBBB Project was the first team in which she made friends – in four years of team projects! Although the DBBB Project is not a solution for loneliness, my anecdotal experience shows that it tends to create a unique level of bonding.

³³ You can view the *About Time* video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQffYfm53C8>.

³⁴ The team received significant positive press for this project, which was rewarding for them. For example, see this article in BU's online daily, Joel Brown, *Class Project Brings All-Gender Bathrooms to Questrom*, BU TODAY (Dec. 16, 2015), www.bu.edu/today/2015/class-project-brings-all-gender-bathrooms-to-questrom/.

- A student concerned about the lack of protagonists of color in youth books spent the semester identifying several such books and writing up lesson plans to teach the books to the appropriate age groups. She then held a classroom discussion on the books with a middle school class in an inner-city school.
- A team of students was concerned about a lack of community between faculty and students. The team members were concerned that they only spoke to their faculty about assignments and grades. The team created a “community bookshelf” where faculty donated books with a note about why they loved the book. Students could borrow and read the book, then discuss it with the professor.

There are three elements of a successful DBBB Project: a deeply held concern about the issue, a topic broad enough that students can pivot mid-semester, and the ability to measure progress and impact. A shared commitment to the project’s issue is essential to success. A few years ago, during DBBB Speed Dating, a pair of students from Hawaii and a student from California were sharing stories about the difficulty of traveling far away from home to attend college. In particular, they discussed that many high school students in Hawaii do not consider attending college out of state because it is costly to visit during the admission process. The team shared the goal of increasing access to out-of-state college for Hawaiian students. It took the team several weeks, however, to determine how to make progress on that goal. The team reported that many of their peers did not understand their concerns, but it was their shared experience – as students who had all traveled far from home for college – that allowed them to persevere. Ultimately, the team created a database of Hawaiians attending college out of state that were willing to speak to high school students and a guide to attending college in Boston for students from the West Coast and Hawaii. The students’ shared concern about the issue was essential to their success.

To highlight the importance of a broad topic for the DBBB Project, consider the example of a team interested in reducing childhood obesity. The group planned to work with elementary school children to increase exercise. After the team was unable to find a school with which to partner, the team was forced to pivot. In the team’s research on obesity, it learned about food deserts. This research ultimately led to the team volunteering on a weekly basis at Daily Table, a nonprofit grocery store in a low-income neighborhood in Boston aimed at providing nutritious food to the under-served community. If the team had not chosen a topic as broad as childhood obesity, it would have been stuck. The ability to pivot enabled the team to have a meaningful volunteer experience, learn a lot about food deserts, and create benefits for an underserved community.

The ability to measure benefits created is essential to success in the DBBB Project. As discussed above in Part III of this article, in order to obtain the benefits of service learning, DBBB Project students are assessed on the measurable benefits they create. Designating a bathroom in their school as gender-neutral created measurable benefits for a team’s goal of supporting gender-neutral students. Picking produce that is distributed to shelters and food pantries created benefits measured in increased access to fresh produce. At times, students struggle to create a project with measurable benefits. For example, one team had the goal of improving mental health for college students. Although a commendable goal, the challenge of mental health for college students is vast and complicated. Frustrated by its inability to work with on-campus mental health organizations because of privacy concerns, the team ultimately created a “kindness campaign.” The team distributed candy and happy messages on slips of paper to students during exams. It was difficult, however, for the team to quantify what impact their efforts had on their goal of improving mental health.

Students work independently throughout the semester with one written progress report due mid-semester. On the day the progress report is due, students share updates and ask for peer advice. Progress reports can be graded for a small number of points, based solely on whether the team or student is making progress. As a result, procrastinating students, who have accomplished little, lose points.

Alumni Advisors

An innovative aspect of the DBBB Project is the use of alumni advisors. Every team (or individual) is assigned an alumni advisor. To assemble my first group of advisors, I contacted by email a group of alumni. I had twenty-five responses within a few days—and many of the alumni had never been in my classes. Thereafter, the advisors are a self-fulfilling group: after students observe the role, they ask to be advisors when they graduate. Because the number of advisors needed varies by semester, most advisors get a semester off periodically.

I hold an annual orientation for the advisors. This is a very short discussion about goals of the DBBB Project, expectations for advisors, and best practices. During the semester, I ask advisors to check in about student progress via email or phone; occasionally we do a group call to discuss common challenges.

The alumni provide insight for the teacher into team dynamics, help students overcome obstacles, and improve accountability throughout the semester. Advisors help students in the transition from faculty-led project

management (as is typical in college assignments) to self-management. The role of the advisor is not to do the work, but to ask students leading questions to move teams forward. The most important leading question that advisors ask their student teams is, “How else can you accomplish your goal?” Students tend to get stuck on their first plan. Advisors do not grade any part of the project.

The advisors are also *being better by doing better*, because the opportunity to connect with current students, help with a service project, and be a mentor are all elements of continued learning. It is a meaningful way to connect alumni back to the university. It is easier than you think to assemble a group of alumni to help. The time commitment is limited; teams define their own meeting schedules, but a schedule of contact once every two weeks is recommended. Video conference is an easy alternative, so advisors can be located all over the world. Local advisors also volunteer to come to class to discuss how to effectively utilize advisors.³⁵ Finally, all of the advisors are invited to attend our final presentations, which is a celebration of the work completed.

Alumni participation in the classroom is rewarding. Not only does the teacher get to continue meaningful relationships, the university benefits from increased alumni engagement – without asking for money! Students are more creative, more productive, and are able to build relationships with alumni. Students learn how to manage their own projects under the guidance of alumni advisors. Many advisors provide career, school, or other advice in addition to assisting with the DBBB Project.

Show Your Work

The semester culminates in a celebratory class session called “Show Your Work,”³⁶ where students showcase their accomplishments. All alumni advisors are invited, as are Deans and other special guests. Students do three-minute presentations without slides. The brief presentations identify the student goal, explain what work they did, and discuss the most meaningful benefit created.

The brief presentations are followed by a “poster session.” Each team creates a visual manifestation of their project. It can be a photo slideshow, a poster, a handout, or a physical object. Half of the teams walk around the room, observe the projects, have the chance to ask questions and hear more about the work. Then, the teams rotate.

Show Your Work has a very different mood than most classroom presentations. Students are excited to share their accomplishments. The three-minute limit on presentations means that students must practice. Prohibiting slides forces students to speak from their hearts and minds, rather than following along with slides. Without fail, these are the best presentations I hear all year. After a brief introduction of each project there are, by design, many unanswered questions. Students, alumni, and guests are excited to walk around and learn more about the projects.

Reflection

Being better requires reflection. The individual reflection paper is where students focus on the “Be Better” part of this assignment. Students discuss why they chose their project and what they learned about the issue; students connect what they did to who they are. Possible topics include the following: how this project changed a student’s view of what businesses and leaders can and should do for society, how one person can make a difference in a short time, how failure can lead to success, and whether they are inspired to continue their work. Every paper is different, but they all echo the “What, So What, Now What” reflective model created by Rolfe, *et al.*³⁷ This reflection model asks students to start with their activity or work, then think about the work’s significance, and finally consider next steps. Students write about *what* work they did during the semester, *why* it matters, and *what they will do now* as a result of their learning.

Reflection is an essential step in Kolb’s experiential learning cycle.³⁸ With reflective observation, students can turn an experience – here their DBBB Projects – into a new idea. Reflection can be seen as “a bridge between experience and theory.”³⁹ It is only with reflection that an activity can turn into an educative experience.⁴⁰ The DBBB

³⁵ This class usually takes place after students have conducted “Speed-Dating” and have identified issues on which to work and potential teams. It does not have to take an entire class session; 30 minutes can be sufficient.

³⁶ Credit to my favorite Celebrity Gossip Podcast, Lainey Gossip, for this name. <http://laineygossipentertainment.libsyn.com/>.

³⁷ GARY ROLFE, DAWN FRESHWATER & MELANIE JASPER, CRITICAL REFLECTION FOR NURSING AND THE HELPING PROFESSIONS: A USER’S GUIDE (2001).

³⁸ Kolb, *supra*, note 9 at 37.

³⁹ Robert G. Bringle & Julie A. Hatcher, *Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning or Experience*, 77 EDUC. HORIZONS 113-119, 114 (1999).

⁴⁰ *Id.*

Project reflection papers demonstrate these concepts. Students are able to generate new ideas about how they want to engage in service in the future, what qualities they might seek in a future employer, and how many benefits one person can create.

A consistent theme in DBBB Project reflection papers is failure. Students reflect on why they failed, how they overcame failures throughout the semester, and what they learned from the failure. Reflection papers often demonstrate increased confidence and greater interest in learning as a result of their failures.⁴¹ In addition to learning about themselves, students learn practical skills around project management and interacting with bureaucratic organizations (such as a university). Reflecting on these experiences allows students to draw conclusions that will shape their future actions, thus completing the Kolb learning cycle.

VII. Conclusion: Lessons Learned

The DBBB Project is a unique assignment and thus may appear daunting for faculty. To increase student success and meaning in the DBBB Project, consider lessons learned from many years of assigning the DBBB Project: focus on the start of the project, encourage students to learn from each other, and emphasize action above all else.

The start of the DBBB Project is the most important part. Indeed, DBBB Speed Dating might be the most important day in the semester of work. It is the time when students define their goals, find teammates, and get excited (or not) about the project. Early on, I did not take the time to do the DBBB Speed Dating activity. I left it to students to define goals and find teams on their own, outside of the classroom. Most students simply chose to work with classmates they know. Often, the teammates did not share a commitment to the same goal. Most students report that the most crucial part of the DBBB Project is choosing to work on an issue you care about. Learn from my mistake: spend time early in the semester to facilitate students' choice of issue and teammates.

Encourage students to learn from each other. One of the rewarding aspects of the DBBB Project is how the project becomes self-perpetuating: students complete the project, graduate, and come back as advisors. While still in school but after completion of my course, students often return to the classroom to share their experiences with the DBBB Project. Students are able to share examples of their projects, which moves the abstract assignment into a more tangible form. Students are open about both the opportunities and challenges presented by the project. Students listen carefully to and trust each other. The first time you assign the DBBB Project you will not have students who have completed it to act as advisors or provide examples and advice to current students. For my first semester implementing the project, I brought in alumni who were active in service or social justice while in college (outside of any class assignment). One group, motivated by Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In*, started a book club to discuss women's issues with students, faculty and staff. Another group started a non-profit organization to help underprivileged high school students with the college application process. These alumni were able to share the benefits of working on a goal about which they cared deeply, the challenges of working on a service or social justice project while in school, and advice on overcoming failures. Most faculty have access to alumni who can serve as an inspiration at the start of the DBBB Project. Thereafter, the cycle of learning will produce many students eager to share their experiences and lessons with those who come after them.

My final lesson is to urge action throughout the semester. In my experience, students want to plan their projects perfectly before they start. They wait for responses to email inquiries. Students read about the issues they care about but have trouble starting with the work. Faculty must remind students to act. Take, for example, a team that wanted to increase recycling in dormitories. For weeks, it attempted to obtain approval from the school's housing department to place recycling bins in certain dormitory hallways. The team was working hard and committed: they sent many emails, tried to set up meetings, and calculated costs of the bins. The school's response time was slow, and weeks were passing. The team was frustrated and worried that they would fail to create any benefits. I met with the team and asked a few questions: What else can you do *now*? What actions can *you* take, within your control, to increase recycling in the dormitories? After this conversation the team understood that it should default to action. The students began knocking on doors and collecting recycling every few days on their own. The team collected a large quantity of trash to be recycled. It also handed out reusable grocery bags, which reduced the number of plastic bags used by dormitory residents. By defaulting to action, the team made progress on its goal and learned a lot about overcoming failure. The lesson from this team's experience is that the most motivated and conscientious students may still need to be urged into action. Faculty should be prepared to remind students to *act* on their goals.

⁴¹ Student reflection on the DBBB Project is consistent with the extensive writing on the importance of failure. See, e.g. JESSICA LAHEY, THE GIFT OF FAILURE (2015).

The DBBB Project can be a transformative experience for students and alumni advisors. The project's self-guided nature pushes students outside of their comfort zones and leads them through a complete learning cycle, from action to failure to reflection to experimentation. Inviting alumni to advise students on substantive projects facilitates their relationship with the university, creates lifelong learners, and provides an outlet for alumni's commitment to service. The DBBB Project uses experience, rather than case studies, to teach corporate social responsibility and social justice. Although the project can be complex to set up, the learning benefits far exceed any organizational challenges for faculty. It is a unique project that incorporates the benefits of well-established pedagogies of experiential learning, service learning, and self-guided projects, and adds the rarely acknowledged value of alumni engagement.

Appendix A **Do Better, Be Better**

Do Better, Be Better:

Rather than just learning about leaders and businesses that make a positive impact on the world, this assignment asks you to be better by doing better. The focus of the assignment is on **benefit** (impact is the wrong word – it implies force) and asks you to find a problem, challenge, or social issue that you can benefit through a semester-long project. The key to the assignment is finding an issue about which you care deeply. I hope that this assignment will inspire you beyond this semester to do better in your life and business. Through working on issues that you care about, you will be better, and consider how your values should affect your professional and personal life. The strong emphasis of this project is **action**.

Your assignment will be assessed based upon the quality and quantity of benefits you create, your explanation of why you chose the project you did, how much you learned about the issue(s), and your reflection on how the work changed you and your perspectives on business and leaders.

Learning Objectives:

The **Do Better, Be Better** assignment has the following learning goals:

- Find an issue about which you care deeply and learn a lot about it.
- Learn through doing (**action**).
- Learn the role of failure in success.
- Learn an integrated theory of change: problem definition, interventions that will make a difference, and measuring incremental outcomes.
- See the benefit you can provide in a (relatively) short amount of time. Imagine the benefit you then will be able to have when you are in a leadership role in an organization.
- Reflect on how your values should shape your work and life – in terms of how you spend your time, money, and talent.
- Understand the nature of our demands on companies and leaders when we develop expectations of corporate social responsibility.

Specific Assignment Requirements:

There are four parts to this assignment:

1. **Project:** This is where you do the actual work. This work will vary widely based on what you choose, but the focus is on action.
2. **Written Mid-Semester Progress Report:** In the middle of the semester, you must submit a written progress report.
3. **Show Your Work:** This is where you share why you chose your project, what you learned about the issue(s), and what you did.
4. **Final Paper:** This is where you reflect upon how your project changed your thinking about your life, your profession, the role of business, government or the justice system, and anything else you learned through this assignment.

Project (35 points) – Team assignment

Team or Individual?

You can do this project alone, or with up to three other classmates (up to four students total). There is value in either choice, but the essential question must be whether you and other students agree on a worthy project. This assignment doesn't work if you merely choose a project to "get it done." If you choose

a team, the expectation for quantity of benefits will be higher. The paper is an individual assignment for all students.

Choice

The hardest part for many of you will be choosing a project. We will do some work in early classes that will allow you to reflect on what matters to you, and on what you would like to spend your semester working. The project should be tied to your values. We will also hear from former students who have successfully completed the project.

Although some of the learning goals of this assignment are related to corporate social responsibility, you need not take on a huge societal issue. In choosing a project, you should think about the organizations and communities in which you live, work, and study. Is there a concern in your community you would like to address? Do you want more students to engage in intellectual discussions outside of class? Does a family member suffer from an illness that has impacted you and your family? Are you a member of a minority group that faces workplace discrimination? Is there a problem at Questrom you want to fix? Did you have a bad experience at Boston University that you can help prevent for future students? If you think more globally, remember that you need to create benefits on the broader issue. For example, if you are worried about child labor, what can you **learn and do** this semester to make a positive change for children forced to work around the world?

Documentation

As you do your work, you will want to document your efforts. Measuring the benefit you provide is an essential part of this assignment, as your grade is on both the quantity and quality of the benefits. Take photos, videos, and notes. Do interviews, collect survey data, and collect research on the issue.

Failure

Failing is part of doing better and is an expected part of this assignment. Your response to failure will be part of your grade.

Alumni Advisors

Every team (or individual) will be assigned an alumni advisor. The role of the advisor is to have a more experienced and objective person to help brainstorm, to help you through team challenges, to help you reflect on why and what you are doing. The role of the advisor is not to do your work for you. It is not to tell you how to get an "A" on the assignment or in my class. The advisors are also being better by doing better, as the opportunity to connect with current students, reflect on an important project, and be a mentor, is an essential part of continuing learning. Your advisors will provide feedback on all students in their group that will factor into your grade. You will have a chance to provide feedback on your advisor as well, which is part of their learning.

Written Mid-Semester Progress Reports – Team assignment (15 Points – based on whether you are actually making progress)

Mid-semester reports have two goals: 1) hold you accountable for working throughout the semester, not just the last two weeks; and 2) help teams overcome obstacles through peer advice and brainstorming.

Bring to class a (typed) document with the following information:

- Write down what work you have done on this project. It should be a bullet point list. I do not need every detail, but what action has occurred? Some ideas to start with include the following: With whom have you met? Where have you volunteered? How often? What have you read? What

have you created? What student groups have you coordinated with? What events have you attended? Your efforts throughout the semester will be reflected in your project grade.

- Write down at least one question about your project on which you need help from the group.

Show Your Work – Team Assignment

After a semester of work, we will celebrate your efforts in an evening class session. All Alumni Advisors are invited. The evening should take about two hours, but please do not make plans for the entire 6:30-9:30 pm time frame.

Your assignment: The evening will consist of short presentations and an open “poster” session.

Presentations: Each team will have exactly three minutes to present. You will be cut off at three minutes. No slides are allowed. All team members do not have to speak. Practice. You can spend your three minutes however you like, but I recommend you answer the following questions:

1. What was your goal?
2. What work did you do?
3. What was your most meaningful benefit/impact?

Open “Poster” Session: Each team should create a visual manifestation of their project. It can be a photo slideshow that runs on a laptop, a poster, a handout, or a physical object. Half the teams will walk around the room, observe the projects, have the chance to ask questions and hear more about your work. Then, we will switch.

Show Your Work is your primary opportunity to communicate to me about the work you did. It is the information from which I will grade your team project. Your paper is a reflection on the “be better” portion of your project, so it is separate and individually graded.

Final Paper (50 points) – Individual Assignment

Being better requires reflection.

Your final reflection paper is where you focus on the Be Better part of this assignment. Your paper should identify your project and discuss why you chose it and what you learned about the issue. You need not discuss at length what you did and the benefits provided, as those will be covered in the Show Your Work event. Instead, focus on what you learned from doing the work. **The key is to consider how *what you did* connects to *who you are*.**

Technical Details

Your final paper should be written as a formal reflection paper – using proper grammar, citations, strong organization, etc. That said, you can have a voice in it – use first person and let me see who you are. Usually, around 2-3 pages of double-spaced text are sufficient.

Appendix B

Thinking About Do Better, Be Better

- 1) The importance of service and civic engagement as a family value is
- 2) The two or three people that I know personally and whom I highly respect for their service and civic engagement are....
 - a) I respect each person so highly because....
- 3) The two or three people that I know personally who seem to be the happiest and most fulfilled in their lives are....
 - a) The nature and degree of the role of service and civic engagement in their life is....
- 4) A service and civic engagement experience that was very satisfying to me includes....
 - a) It was satisfying because....
- 5) A service and civic engagement experiences experience that was very disappointing to me was....
 - a) It was disappointing because....
 - b) What I learned from this experience was....
- 6) The news story I paid most attention to in the last month(s) is....
- 7) The social issue that keeps me up at night is....
- 8) My communities at [university or college] include (fraternity, sorority, student organizations, service organizations, sports teams, etc.)
- 9) If I could spend a semester studying any topic or issue (without worrying about grades) it would be....
- 10) It is 2 am and I am talking with my friends about....
- 11) The thing I would most like to change at [university or college] (excluding academic requirements) is....
- 12) If I had \$500,000 to spend on something at [university or college], what would it be?
- 13) If I had \$500,000 to spend to help the world, what would I do?
- 14) What advice would you give to a student matriculating to [university or college] this fall about developing diverse, authentic relationships?

- 15) Do you think you have “created value” at university or college/the world during your time at [university or college]?
- 16) What are your resources? Resources can be time, creativity, money, your network, your skills, etc. Do you have a flexible schedule? (Or, do you have a job, are you an athlete, or do you have other obligations that would make volunteering during work hours a challenge?)
- 17) Are you more interested in making a positive change in university or college/the United States/the World?
- 18) List three topics or issues that came to mind when you first read about this assignment. A topic or issue should be broad, such as “homelessness,” “stress levels of teenagers,” “cheating at [university or college],” or “sexual harassment.”
- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____