SEEK 915: Sustainability Lab

Spring 2010, Section 81
Thursdays, 6:30 – 9:30pm*
Room TBD

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Course Description

Sustainability Lab is a new experiential learning course in which Kellogg students work on a "real-world" sustainability project with a client organization, under the supervision of a mixed academic and business management team. Teams of 3 Kellogg students will work with a client organization that has requested Kellogg's help in addressing an issue related to environmental sustainability.

Sustainability, defined broadly to include environmental, social and economic practices that sustain the Earth's resources for future generations, has become an increasing concern for businesses and non-profit organizations alike. In this course, you will explore the practicalities involved in transforming businesses and other organizations for environmental sustainability. Each Kellogg student team works under the guidance of a faculty member and in collaboration with a client sponsor. During the term, you are expected to contribute 8-10 hr./week to the project. The class is structured around the project work and includes weekly team meetings with the faculty advisors as well as three 90 minute lecture classes. At the end of the quarter, students give presentations to the client and to the class.

By the time you complete this course, you will have gained skills in identifying and prioritizing strategic opportunities for green business practices, and in implementing the changes to core business processes that are needed to sustain the lasting health of natural, social, and economic systems.

SEEK 915 is designed as a capstone experience that integrates concepts and skills from a variety of courses in the MBA curriculum in the context of a real business challenge centered on environmental sustainability. While we expect most full time students to take S-Lab in the spring of their second year, the course is open to all students. There are no prerequisites to taking this class, although it is advisable to take one or several courses in Kellogg’s sustainability curriculum prior to S-Lab.
**Teaching Format**

SEEK 915 is an experiential learning course. The course is centered on a project with a corporate or non-profit client organization. Most of the work will occur on the client site or in your own time. In addition, you are required to have weekly meetings with your faculty advisors and there are four 90 minute interactive lecture classes on key aspects of sustainability. Lectures and team meetings are scheduled during the same weekly window to minimize scheduling complications.

Prior to the start of the quarter you will negotiate and sign an agreement of understanding with the client organization that defines the scope, timeline and deliverables of the project. A mid-term progress report is due in week 5 of the quarter. At the end of the quarter you will present the results of your work to the class and to the management team of the client organizations.

**Weekly Team Meetings**

The purpose of the team meetings with the faculty advisor is to review progress, share new ideas and insights, solve problems, and review deliverables. You are expected to participate in each meeting in a timely and prepared fashion. Lateness or absence will negatively affect your grade. With the unanimous approval of all team members and the faculty advisor, teams can change the time and location of weekly meetings if needed. It is your responsibility to schedule team meetings and to organize work as necessary.

**The Role of Faculty Advisors**

You are expected to manage the project independently in collaboration with the client liaison. The faculty advisor’s role is to help you structure and solve problems, to help avoid and remove roadblocks, to intervene in the case of conflicts within the team or with the client, and to suggest appropriate resources, such as experts and reading materials applicable to the project. Important: The faculty advisor is not a project manager – you own the project and are ultimately responsible for progress and deliverables.

**Substantive Class Sessions**

In addition to the weekly meetings with the project team and faculty advisor, there will be three substantive class sessions on basic sustainability issues during the first half of the course (see also the course schedule below):

- The business cases for sustainability
- Implementation issues for sustainability initiatives
- Public policy and sustainability

**Participating Organizations and Faculty Advisors**

The following organizations will offer projects in Spring 2010:

- Autodesk – Sizing the “Rapid Energy Modeling” market (Weber)
- Baxter Healthcare – Developing Strategic Sustainability Capabilities (Nadler)
- Coach Inc. – Sustainability Metrics and Reporting Across the Supply Chain (Weber)
- Recycled Energy Development – Supply/Demand Analysis of RPS Pricing (Kiesling)
- Site Controls – Opportunities in Energy Efficiency and Demand Response Markets (Nadler)
- Tendril – Building the Business Case for the Residential Smart Grid (Kiesling)

Project teams are assigned by the course instructors based on students’ rank preferences submitted after the end of bidding.
Course and Reading Materials

There is no paper course packet for the class. A small number of background readings for the four substantive class sessions will be distributed via the course home page on Blackboard: http://courses.northwestern.edu, or by email. Course announcements, work planning templates, and additional readings and resources will also be available on the course home page.

Assignments and Grades

The grade in this course is heavily weighted to the quality of the final team report delivered to the client. The team’s finished product will be evaluated based on the depth and comprehensiveness of research and analysis, skillful application of business tools and concepts, practicality of the findings and recommendations, and the overall quality of deliverables. Deliverables will be evaluated by the faculty advisors and by the client companies via a confidential project assessment. Each group also performs a peer evaluation of members’ contribution and individual grades are adjusted accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed off LOU &amp; work plan</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>April 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term progress review</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>April 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final recommendations report</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>June 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Faculty advisor grade</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Client assessment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Peer evaluation *</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meeting and class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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* Note: It is at the discretion of the faculty advisor to adjust any student’s final grade up or down by a full letter grade in the event that the student’s peers unanimously and significantly score his or her contributions significantly above or below the overall team effort. In other words, the weighting for peer evaluations may be greater than 10% for outliers on the team.

LOU, work plan: Developing a focused and well-structured letter of understanding and work plan early on is crucial to the team’s success. Work plans must clearly state the core question that the team is trying to answer and then disaggregate the issues to be explored in answering that question. Each issue should have an explicit set of activities (e.g.: research, interviews, modeling) to be completed along with an assignment of responsibilities and a deadline. The work plan needs to be signed off by the client and the faculty advisor.

Progress Review: Each team will prepare a progress review in PowerPoint that can be presented to the class and the clients in week 5. This is the chance for teams to share their initial findings with management and remind the client of what work remains. Initial hypotheses and preliminary recommendations can also be floated for client reaction at this time. It is important to use this opportunity to get specific feedback from the clients on how things are going. Are they satisfied with the results so far? Do they wish to focus the remaining time on one or two specific things you’ve identified? Are there issues that need to be addressed?
**Final Recommendations Report:** The final project report should be a concise, well-structured PowerPoint document which synthesizes the team’s research and analysis and answers the client’s core questions with logical, well-supported arguments and a clear set of actionable recommendations. Detailed documentation of research, analyses, recommendations and other deliverables referred to in the presentation can be documented either in the PowerPoint document or in a supplementary detailed report.

**Special Drop Deadline**

Due to the unique nature of S-Lab, students should bid and enroll only if they are 99% certain they will take the class. If students drop out during the quarter, not only do they leave their teammates under-resourced for the project, they disappoint their corporate clients with whom they’ve already signed and agreement and work plan. For these reasons, students will be asked to sign a “Team Commitment Letter” on the first day of class promising to work together throughout the term and to drop the course only in the event of a significant, unforeseen personal or professional obligation. The last day to officially drop this course without penalty is April 5.

**Honor Code**

All students are expected to adhere to the Kellogg honor code which can be found at [http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/stu_aff/policies/honorcode.htm](http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/stu_aff/policies/honorcode.htm). In particular, students are reminded to provide complete citations for all research, data, graphs and quotations taken from other sources. This includes documenting sources on PowerPoint presentations as well as other written reports and client correspondence. Remember – plagiarism is a serious breach of the Kellogg honor code. For more information on how to avoid pitfalls, please visit [http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html).

**Client Confidentiality**

The information you will receive from client companies is considered proprietary and strictly confidential. Students are expected to sign confidentiality agreements requested by the client organization, and to make all reasonable efforts to protect non-public client information and to destroy or return all information at the conclusion of the course if the client so requests. If team members wish to share confidential information among themselves, it is recommended that they use a shared workspace on Blackboard which is password protected. The faculty advisor will provide a sample confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement if requested by the client.
## Course Schedule And Project Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| 1    | April 1       | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Class administrative information  
First team meeting with faculty advisors  
**Due:** Completed LOU, project work plan |
| 2    | April 8       | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Lecture: Business case for sustainability (Scott Nadler)  
Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 3    | April 15      | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Lecture: Implementation issues (K. Weber)  
Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 4    | April 22      | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Lecture: Policy side of sustainability (Lynne Kiesling)  
Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 5    | April 29      | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Presentations of project progress reports  
Teams meet with faculty advisors  
**Due:** Mid-Term project reports |
| 6    | May 6         | 18:30-21:30    | at team discretion | Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 7    | May 13        | 18:30-21:30    | at team discretion | Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 8    | May 20        | 18:30-21:30    | at team discretion | Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 9    | May 27        | 18:30-21:30    | at team discretion | Teams meet with faculty advisors |
| 10   | **June 2** (Wed) | 18:30-21:30    | TBD      | Presentations of draft team reports |
| 11   | June 10       | 18:30          | TBD      | Presentations of draft team reports  
**Due:** Final project report and presentation to faculty.  
**Due:** Client assessment of project to faculty advisor |