STRT-947: Healthcare Consulting Strategy Lab ("HC-Lab")

Spring 2020

Thursday, 6:30 to 9:30 pm

Clinical Associate Professor Paul Campbell

Course Description

The Healthcare Consulting Strategy Lab (HC-Lab) applies your course work and strategic thinking skills to current issues with leading companies across the health care ecosystem. This ten-week experiential learning HC-Lab emphasizes real-world problem solving on a wide range of unique challenges — from marketing to operations, and digital health to care coordination. I believe in the old adage: Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.

The class will meet four times as a group and attend the MacEachern Symposium. Your team of 4-5 students work directly with senior leaders at your client. Class time is designed to build on your strategy while offering everyone insights into each project so you can see how the health care value chain currently operates. Project options will be made available during the application process and students will be allowed to rank preferences and work on projects that target their interests. Client sectors span across the health care industry and will likely include pharmaceuticals, medical products/devices, providers, payers, digital health applications and more. The final deliverable is a presentation with recommendations to the client.

The HC-Lab lets you delve into the nitty-gritty of this complex industry and make recommendations on how to create and capture value for your client. Teams will develop strategic recommendations to address a well-defined challenge posed by a healthcare client. Teams will carefully examine the client’s industry, understand the competitive dynamic among the various parties, evaluate the company’s current strategy vis a vis the problem at hand, and develop and justify their recommendations. Projects may involve original data analysis, interviews with customers and client representatives, and reviews of relevant articles and research studies.

Each team will identify a student team leader who will help to plan the workflow, act as the primary client liaison, and coordinate across team members. In addition, everyone on the team will have defined roles and we will review the features of high-performing teams at the outset of the course.

The main deliverable is the final presentation for your client. Depending on the project, the final deliverable will include a written project plan or paper that the client can use to fully implement the initiative. Representatives from the client will attend the final presentation and provide evaluative input.

Class wide sessions will take place four times (4/2, 4/16, 4/30, 5/14) and are devoted to active learning exercises focusing on your project. All students are expected to attend the MacEachern Symposium on May 6. If there are unavoidable conflicts for portions of the symposium, please discuss with the professor in advance.
The first class on April 2 will lead with a discussion to define what is strategic thinking, how to approach this client consulting engagement and best practices of a high-performing team. The remainder of the class will utilize a class-wide active learning problem solving exercise to prepare for that first client meeting. The goal of this exercise is to help you brainstorm approaches to the project, leverage the expertise among your colleagues in the class and expose everyone to the other projects and the crosscutting issues they present.

Panel discussions will occur during classes later in the quarter and will bring leadership from across the industry to offer real world applications of the issues you will be addressing with your client. After each panel, you will be required to write a 500-word essay and we will discuss your observations of the panel during the following class.

Every team will also conduct at least one (1) Test & Improve session during the second and third class sessions on April 16 and 30. This exercise creates a safe environment for brainstorming. This is an opportunity to utilize your peers to help scope the project, review your analysis to date and solicit ideas for your overall approach. The team can use this exercise to address one main issue or many. You may choose to focus primarily on scoping the project or better understanding a critical issue that is a key component of your project.

Teams will also meet with the instructor as needed during mutually agreed upon times. In addition, the instructor will hold one-on-one meetings with every student to discuss your individual goals and progress.

Final project presentations will take place at the client during the final two weeks of the quarter based on mutually agreed upon times with the client.

**Grading**

Your course grade is largely determined by the strength of your analysis and recommendations, as well as your ability to clearly convey the reasoning behind your decisions and conclusions. A sample grading sheet with guidance will be provided in advance of your project submission. Client companies will also be asked to complete a confidential project assessment. Their feedback will be incorporated in the instructor’s evaluation.

The instructor will award participation scores based on your interactions with the class and individual teams, as well as the confidential team feedback forms. Attendance is a component of the participation score as well as the essay’s after expert panels.

- 40% Participation (i.e., class, essays, team meetings, client presentations)
- 30% Written Project Plan or Paper
- 30% Final Presentation (written and oral)

This course may not be taken pass-fail.
Other details

The client will provide relevant background information and be available to teams for kickoff and interim meetings, as well as emails and information requests. Some clients may require students to sign non-disclosure agreements.

Twice during the course, you will submit a group evaluation form. This form allows you to allocate points to each team member to reflect his/her contribution to the project. There are 100 points in total, so that an even allocation across 5 team members implies 20 points each. You will be asked to provide comments explaining the reasoning for your allocation. The instructor will work with groups to ensure full commitment of all participants.

Class Commitment

Due to the unique nature of HC-Lab, students are encouraged to enroll only if they are 99% certain they will stick with the class. If a student drops out early in the quarter, not only does the student leave his/her teammates under-resourced for the project, s/he disappoints clients, who in many cases will have interacted with the student or been informed of his/her participation. 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.

Officially, the last day to drop this course without penalty is the end of the first week of Spring quarter.

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. 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.