USAGE RATE AND HELPFULNESS OF CLIENT BASED UNIVERSITY CLASSES
AT HSU

BY

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Committee Membership
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ABSTRACT

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Universities around the world offer service learning/client-based courses, which provide opportunities for students and organizations to work together on semester-long projects. Research has unearthed the benefits students receive from partaking in the client-based courses. However, there is a paucity of research regarding the benefits clients receive from participating in service learning/client-based courses. To help fill the void, an empirical study was conducted to determine the benefits participating clients receive from Humboldt State University client-based courses. A study including 31 respondents from six different client-based university courses was conducted. Measures determined the impact on participating organizations, the satisfaction the clients endured, and recommendations the clients endorsed to help improve future client-based courses. The results demonstrate both high amounts of positive impact and satisfaction. Clients generated recommendations that would help improve the future client-based courses. Clients benefitted by receiving new information, insights, and strategies. The clients also implemented a majority of the students’ final deliverables. Despite the positive results,
this research only scrapes the surface of client-based course research. This study sets the stage for further research in this field.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Nancy Vizenor and Dr. Tasha Souza for their expert advice and encouragement throughout this difficult project.
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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Nancy Vizenor (Assistant Professor of Business at Humboldt State University), Dr. Tasha Souza (Professor of Communications at Humboldt State University), and Josh Ertmer (MBA Student of Humboldt State University) collaborated to complete an empirical research paper on “The Usage Rate and Helpfulness of Client Based University Classes at HSU.”

Humboldt State University is a California State University located in Northern California. The University was founded in 1913 and over the past 100 years Humboldt State has emphasized a combination of classroom learning with hands-on experience that will help students gain critical skills (About Humboldt, humboldt.edu). Humboldt State University gives students hands-on experience through client-based courses. Client-based courses, allow students to take the skills and knowledge they gain from within the classroom and apply them while working with clients in the community. Clients can be individuals, non-profits, for-profit organizations, or government organizations. The types of clients depend on students’ ability to meet client needs within the subject of the course or type of curriculum being implemented. Students generally work outside of the classroom to complete a specific project for their distinct client. Client-based courses give students both sides of the learning spectrum, the traditional in class lecture or seminar learning and the hands-on learning/real world experience found outside the classroom. Humboldt State offers at least six client-based courses in different fields of study. The courses included in this research are listed in the table found below.
Table 1: List of courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses included in the Research (Undergraduate and Graduate Level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA 417 – Small Business Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA 446 – Marketing Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM 480 – Communication Training &amp; Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGR 215 – Introduction to Design Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGR 305 – Technology and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMC 429 – Advanced Public Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advanced Public Relations, Communication Training & Consulting, Introduction to Design Products, Marketing Research, Small Business Consulting, and Technology and the Environment. The client-based courses tend to be upper division courses. However, one lower division course, ENGR 215-Introduction to Design Products, was included. Prerequisites prevent lower level students from taking the upper division courses. All courses, except the one lower division course, have prerequisites. Client-based courses tend to be more extensive and require more time outside of the classroom. The students in the courses are generally split into smaller groups of about 3 to 5 students and each group is assigned a different client from within the community. Depending on the course subject, students work on projects, create products, conduct research, or plan specific events for their given client. The benefits students receive from these courses are very apparent through previous research (Kreth, 2005). However, there is very little research on the benefits the participating clients receive from the courses thus-providing the opportunity to research the subject further.
Table 2: Research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some questions to be answered include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In what ways did the clients benefit from the courses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did the clients who have participated in these courses implement any of the recommendations’ or used products the students have created?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would the clients be willing to participate in these client-based courses in the future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would they recommend participation to other individuals, groups or organizations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer these questions, previous clients of the previously mentioned client-based courses offered at Humboldt State University were asked questions about the usage rates and effectiveness of information and products created by students. Previous clients were also questioned about possible improvements in the process of client-based courses/projects at HSU. To fit the range of different subjects of client-based courses, the survey questions were written to accommodate different classes. The data collected from clients were both quantitative and qualitative. Further research can be conducted on how course structures can affect the amount of satisfaction from the participating clients and how the courses have affected the clients monetarily.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To determine if research has been conducted on similar topics, existing literature was analyzed. Client-based courses and service learning research were the main focal point. Effects created by these types of courses, whether the effects were negative or positive, were analyzed to broaden the scope of research. University client-based courses of many different subjects were examined. The literature review conducted demonstrates that students benefit from client-based courses. Client-based courses are different than traditional university classes. Traditional university courses consist of a traditional lesson plan, which is based off of a text book. Many client-based courses use a lesson plan that correlates with a textbook and also consists of an outside project. The project usually consists of students working with a client outside of the university, but the project depends on the course. Non-traditional formats such as distance learning, compressed timeframe (nine-week) courses, and adult graduate student learners can be successful client-based courses when utilized in these contexts (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). Client-based courses are also known as service courses. “Service learning in business courses can better prepare students to be socially responsible managers” (Gallagher, 2007. Page 1). Client-based and service learning courses give students real world experience and allow them to implement the classroom learning in a real-world situation. Unlike traditional courses that use case studies (fictional scenarios), client-based courses help students understand and reciprocate adequately to real-world clients and organizations (Kreth, 2005). Students have benefitted more in client-based courses than other course
models. In a study comprised of Master of Accounting students and three different course models, research found the service-learning courses heightened student consciousness of ability, self-confidence in selected careers, the urge to study the subject, and the performance on course tasks (Rose, Rose and Norman, 2005). Service courses also sharpen students’ skills and help students really understand how organizations work. After participating in a service course that allowed students to create communication documents to help nonprofits, students learned to write concise and think critically about the key elements of writing and of a nonprofit’s mission (Crews and Stitt-Gohdes, 2012). Service learning benefits students in two ways, the academic dimension and the interpersonal dimension. “The academic dimension of student learning includes domain-specific and general academic knowledge and skills. The interpersonal dimension of student learning encompasses communication, collaboration and leadership skills, and the personal dimension consists of self-knowledge and personal efficacy” (Preiser-Houy and Navarrete, 2006. Page. 273). There are many benefits that students receive from an effective client-based courses.

Despite the many benefits students receive from client-based courses there may be some negative effects on the participating students. It is important for students to enroll in service classes that they may be interested in, because client-based courses include more required time outside of the classroom to work on the client project. Students pay more attention to the client-based courses than they do to their core courses, when they have a high valence of the course subject (Fagbohungbe, 2012). Client-based courses also need a structured lesson plan if the students are going to benefit from the course. The client
project, takes time and focus away from traditional learning inside of the classroom. Students get involved with service learning that fail to fully help their considerable skills (Papamarcos, 2005). When misalignment between a student's learning desires and imposed learning activities create negative effects, it may distract an individual from their learning objectives (Yorio and Ye, 2010). If students are not interested in the subject of the service/client-based course than there could be negative effects associated with the students’ academic performance. Thus far, the benefits students receive from the client-based courses outweigh the negatives associated. It is however important, for the benefit of the student that participates, that the student enrolls in courses they are interested in and that the course itself is structured in a way that helps fulfill their considerable skills.

The research conducted demonstrates that students benefit from client-based courses. There are always two sides of the story, and the clients and communities that participate in client-based courses benefit in different ways. The first benefit they may receive is a free service (Preiser-Houy and Navarrette, 2006). The community and the businesses within that community receive resources that they may not have had in the past. By participating in service learning/client-based courses valuable resources, for example teachers, students, and information, become accessible for the community. The courses also help the community by bolstering economic development, acknowledging educational and health needs, and building cultural life of the community (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996). The benefits received from community can be tangible and intangible, depending on the outcome of the course.
There has been very little research conducted that focuses on the benefits clients receive from client-based courses and service courses. From the research that has been examined, it is safe to say that the found benefits outweigh the unearthed negatives when it comes to service learning/client-based courses. The research that exists focuses primarily on the structure of the course, the benefits students receive, some benefits clients/community members receive, and some disadvantages in service courses. We learned that the majority of service courses create positive student outcomes, but that is due to the specific professors, structures, and the support the service courses receive from the University. The negatives that are associated with service learning/client-based courses are due to the students’ perception of the subject/course. In the previous literature, there was nothing negative associated with the clients/community.
METHOD

Research Objectives

1. To determine the impact of client-based projects at HSU.
2. To determine the effectiveness of client-based projects at HSU.
3. To determine how to improve client-based projects at HSU for future projects.

Hypothesis

Ho 1: The participants did not implement or use the recommendations or products provided by the students participating in the client-based courses.
Ha 1: The participants did implement and use the recommendations or products provided by the students participating in the client-based courses.

Ho 2: The participants were not positively affected by the recommendations and products provided by the students participating in the client-based courses.
Ha 2: The participants were positively affected by the recommendations and products provided by the students participating in the client-based courses.

Ho 3: No new recommendations or constructive thoughts were given to improve the process of client-based projects at HSU for future projects.
Ha 3: New recommendations and constructive thoughts were given to improve the process of client-based projects at HSU for future projects.
These hypotheses assess whether or not client-based courses are beneficial to the local businesses that participate in the client-based courses at HSU. By knowing whether the clients implemented the recommendations given to them by students, we are able to determine if the course was beneficial to the clients. Respondents completing our survey will tell us if they have implemented the recommendations given by students.

**Survey Creation**

Before launching the survey, I obtained the necessary Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research was approved in January 2014. The survey was administered using surveymonkey.com as an implementation tool. The full survey can be found in the appendix. The survey link was included in emails. If necessary, a phone call was carried out to inform the participant about the survey. The survey contained both quantitative and qualitative questions. There was a total of 18 questions, 12 of them being quantitative questions and 6 being qualitative. There were two groups of questions that were designed to shed light on three major research objectives. The first being the impact of the courses on their group or organization. The second being the satisfaction clients received from their participation. The third being recommendations to improve the process of client-based projects at HSU for future projects. The two groups of questions designed to meet the three objectives were, satisfaction and impact.
Table 3: Questions that outline topic groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups that meet Objectives</th>
<th>Questions used.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Impact</td>
<td>Quantitative Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1. Thinking back to the client-based/service-learning course with which you were partnered, how much of the information, insights, or strategies provided by students to the clients was new?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2. Overall, how much of an impact did the client-based project make on your organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3. After the completion of the client-based project, did you or someone else in your organization implement or use the suggestions, products or tools the students provided?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q13. How satisfied were you with the final deliverable of the client-based project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q4. Please think back, and describe how the suggestions, products or tools were used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q5. It would help us if you would describe how your company or organization benefitted, if at all from the client-based project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Satisfaction</th>
<th>Quantitative Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q6. How was the process of working with the students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q10. How likely would you recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q11. How likely would your organization participate in another HSU client-based project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q12. How satisfied were you with the overall experience of the client-based project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q14. How satisfied were you with the students’ abilities to meet your organization’s needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q7. Please let us know what were the challenges, if any, working with the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q8. Please share what you liked about working with the students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q9. What advice could you provide for improving future client-based projects?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Groups that meet Objectives. | Questions used.
--- | ---
 | Q15. Please share any other thoughts, feelings, or experiences about the client-based project.

Sample

Respondents participated in one of the following courses at Humboldt State University; Marketing Research (Two different Professors), Advanced Public Relations, Introduction to Design Products, Technology and the Environment, Communication Training & Consulting, and Business Consulting. The targeted individuals are or were affiliates, employees, owners, or volunteers of an organization that participated in one of the courses found above. A sample frame was compiled by contacting the professors who teach or have taught the client-based courses. The contacts collected were clients who have participated in the courses between the years 2005 and 2013. The table below demonstrates the number of participants that were sampled for each course.

Table 4: Number of respondents per course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Course</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA 417 – Small Business Consulting</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMC 429 – Advanced Public Relations</td>
<td>Seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM 480 – Communication Training &amp; Consulting</td>
<td>Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGR 215 – Introduction to Design Products</td>
<td>Seven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific Course | Number of Respondents
---|---
ENGR 305 – Technology and the Environment | One
BA 446 – Marketing Research | Thirty-two

**Contact Methodology**

Six different types of client-based courses were included in the research to ensure an adequate sample size. The sample size was small, due to the short existence of the client-based courses at Humboldt State University. The frame consisted of 58 clients. Before the administration of the survey the goal was to have a response rate of 50% and the n would equal 29.

1. A sample frame was compiled by contacting the professors who have taught the courses, and gathered all contact information regarding the clients who have participated since 2005.

2. The participants were sent an email describing why they were being contacted, a brief description of the course they participated in, the year they participated, and within this email there was a link to the survey.

3. If participants did not respond with in the first week of the initial email being sent, then a follow up email was sent.

4. If the email address was rejected or that individual no longer worked for the specific organization, then a phone call to that organization was required. The
call consisted of an explanation for the call, a brief description of the course they participated in, and information on how to take the survey.

The Participants (chosen clients) were originally supposed to be approached with the survey in three different ways, if necessary. However, only two of those methods were implemented because of the amount of responses received from the chosen participants. The survey was not mandatory and each client was made aware it was completely voluntary.
RESULTS

There were 31 out of 58 administered surveys completed, producing a 53% response rate.

Table 5: Research Objective associated with topic areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Objectives</th>
<th>Topic Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To determine the impact of client-based projects at HSU.</td>
<td>General Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To determine the effectiveness of client-based projects at HSU.</td>
<td>Process Satisfaction/ Improvements and Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To determine how to improve client-based projects at HSU for future projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based upon the generated results, the feedback was separated into two main topic areas that aligned with the three research objectives. The first topic being the general impact clients experienced from the client-based courses. The topic, general impact, includes quantitative and qualitative evidence that rejects the null hypothesis. The second topic is the satisfaction clients received from these client-based courses. The second topic encompasses two objectives. The second topic, process satisfaction, includes both quantitative and qualitative data. The data determined the effectiveness of the client-based courses and generated feedback on how to improve the process for future client-based courses. Both objectives null hypotheses were rejected. The quantitative data was analyzed and then organized based off of the most common answers. The common responses can be found in the tables below. The qualitative data comes from the survey’s
open ended questions and will be discussed by themes found within the results. Due to the different courses used in this study, common themes were difficult to acknowledge within the results. For example, students in the Introduction to Design Products and Technology and the Environment courses design, create, and implement actual products for their clients. While, students in the other courses conduct projects and deliver information for their specific clients.

**General Impact**

Table 6: Quantitative question results regarding general impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question about Impact</th>
<th>Most Common Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Thinking back to the client-based/service-learning course with which you were partnered, how much of the information, insights, or strategies provided by students to the clients was new?</td>
<td>83.87% of the respondents gained new information, insights, or strategies provided by students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Overall, how much of an impact did the client-based project make on your organization?</td>
<td>80% of respondents saw a moderate to large impact on the organization they worked for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. After the completion of the client-based project, did you or someone else in your organization implement or use the suggestions, products or tools the students provided?</td>
<td>92.34% of respondents had at least a small amount of the suggestions, products or tools provided by students implemented or used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q1. Thinking back to the client-based/service-learning course with which you were partnered, how much of the information, insights, or strategies provided by students to the clients was new?

- I don’t know or this does not apply because the students created something for my business or organization
- Lots of new information, insights or strategies
- Some new information, insights or strategies
- Very little new information, insights or strategies
- No new information, insights or strategies

Number of Respondents

Figure 1: Question one results

Q2. Overall, how much of an impact did the client-based project make on your organization?

- I don’t know
- A large impact
- A moderate impact
- Not much of an impact
- No impact at all

Number of Respondents

Figure 2: Question two results
Based upon the results it is apparent the majority of the client-based courses established some kind of impact. 83.87% of respondents gained new information, insights, or strategies provided by students. Clients who participated in the client-based courses, learned something that was new to their organization. These courses bring in new information, insights, or strategies to organizations whether they are important or not. This new information may have never come to the organizations attention, if they had not participated in the client-based courses. 80% of respondents saw a moderate to large impact on the organization they worked for. The majority of respondents felt the client-based courses made a moderate to large impact, meaning the organization was at least
moderately effected in a positive way. At the end of each semester, the groups of students
in the client-based courses give their clients a final deliverable. From conversations with
Professors, students deliver tangible products, plan and host events, and create reports.
When asked if they or their organization implemented or used suggestions, products or
tools provided by students, 92.34% of respondents had at least a small amount of the
suggestions, products or tools implemented or used. This indicates that the final
deliverables carry enough value for the organizations to implement or use the
deliverables. These quantitative questions set the stage for the anecdotal data provided by
respondents answering the survey’s open ended questions.

Table 7: Qualitative themes regarding general impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Questions Used</th>
<th>Themes Found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General Impact  | Q4. Please think back, and describe how the suggestions, products or tools were used.  
Q5. It would help us if you would describe how your company or organization benefitted, if at all, from the client-based project. | 1. Recommendations and products were implemented and beneficial.                 
2. Gained new insights and validated previous thoughts.                        
3. The suggestions, products or tools aligned with clients’ organizations mission and strategy. |

The themes found are very broad, due to the different client-based course subjects. Many
of the Engineering course (Introduction to Design Products and Technology and the
Environment) clients implemented the products built, specifically to fulfill their needs. For example one of the Engineering course client’s wrote, “It was an incredibly productive semester, with a range of projects including a grey water marsh, wind belt energy generator, rainwater catchment design software, and a pedal powered computer. Each item has been used.” (Respondent #3, Question 4). The Non-Engineering course clients (Marketing Research, Advanced Public Relations, Introduction to Design Products, Technology and the Environment, Communication Training & Consulting, and Business Consulting), depending on their needs, generally receive reports that include information, insights, recommendations, or strategies. Once the report is presented, it is under the client’s own discretion whether they want to pursue or implement the information, insights, recommendations, or strategies. The majority of respondents felt the recommendations and products were beneficial to their organization, after their implementation. Almost all of the respondents who participated in the Engineering courses used the product that was given to them. The information, insights, and strategies presented to the non-engineering course clients were used in various ways. Organizations are using the deliverables in their strategic planning process, creating marketing plans, developing new target markets, and improving their organization internally. Discussing the specifics is very difficult, because the clients are in different organizations with different business, cultures, values, and necessities. One respondent discussed, “The organization was able to redirect and better focus the marketing strategies that were being used. We were also able to determine where advertising funds were best spent.” (Respondent #30, Question 4) This type of
information is very beneficial to small businesses, who may not have the money to pay for marketing research. This specific client was able to direct funds to advertising efforts that could bring more value, according to the students, to the organization. In some situations, the deliverables shed light on the organizations core competencies. The information allowed the client to gain a fresh look at what their organization is all about. One client discussed how their organization benefitted, “Increased perspective of how our organization compares & contrasts to other organization/businesses which offer some similar services.” (Respondent 1, Question 5). Another respondent explained how beneficial the deliverable was, “By clarifying our position in the community (market) we have, to some extent, refocused our education and outreach (marketing) efforts.” (Question 5, Respondent 12). The clients and organizations implemented the deliverables in different ways and for different reasons.

Based off of the open ended questions answered, it is safe to say clients gained new insights and validated predetermined thoughts. Due to the tangible products received, engineering course clients are excluded from this theme. Prior to participation, clients had predetermined thoughts and dispositions. After their participation, those predetermined thoughts and dispositions were validated by student research. One client simply stated, “Helped validate some of my hunches.” (Question 5, Respondent 11). In other cases, clients gained solely new information. New information provided can help a business grow and become more impactful in their given industry. Optimistic views on new information was demonstrated by a client who wrote, “New insights and fresh eyes and ideas are always important for a business. If 1 in 10 ideas were successfully implemented
I would consider that an incredible success for any organization and project.” (Question 5, Respondent 16). The client-based projects are not revolutionizing businesses or industries, but they are generating useful information. Clients were vocal about the time saved. Gathering the information, provided by students, by themselves would use a lot of the organizations time and resources. Many different variables determine the significance of information produced. These variables include the professor, course structure, materials, students, client, organization, etc. The information generated by students, created value for the participating organizations in different ways. Many organizations used their information to develop strategies, create marketing plans, and improve internal operations. While others, used the information as a reference or support for their previous thoughts. Some information is better than others, but all information can be useful with the right implementation.

Clients felt the suggestions, products or tools aligned with their organizations’ missions and strategies. It is very important for students to make sure the suggestions, products or tools that align with the organization’s mission and strategy, unless the organization is looking for major change. It was evident, clients felt it was important for the deliverables to align with their organization’s missions and strategies. Information wasn’t the only deliverable aligned with a company’s mission and strategy. One respondent explains, “The organization is intended to teach sustainability, and it fulfilled our mission to support these projects. We also benefited as the items have been used to varying degrees in the eco-hostel we eventually started in downtown Arcata.” (Question 5, Respondent 3). The engineering courses developed products that helped organizations fulfill their
mission. The non-engineering courses developed strategies that helped organizations fulfill their mission.

It is evident that client-based courses can make a significant impact, which benefits organizations in different ways. Student information, insights, and strategies can help develop, refine, and create business activities for any organizations. Some examples of business activities are, marketing plans, strategic planning, financing, and operational efficiency analysis. New information generated by students benefit clients and the organizations they work for. In some cases new information was not found, however the information students gathered was able to impact an organization by validating the clients previous thoughts. The deliverables produced by students provide a larger impact when they align with the company’s mission and strategies. Whether the impact is large or small, the impact spawned is generally positive.
## Process Satisfaction/Improvements and Recommendations

Table 8: Quantitative question results regarding process satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question about Impact</th>
<th>Most Common Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How was the process of working with the students?</td>
<td>90.32% of the respondents found the process enjoyable and very enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied were you with the students’ abilities to meet your organization’s needs?</td>
<td>93.34% of respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied with the students abilities to meet their organization’s needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely would your organization participate in another HSU client-based project?</td>
<td>100% of respondents would probably and definitely participate in another HSU client-based project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely would you recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone?</td>
<td>90.67% of the respondents would probably and definitely recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied were you with the final deliverable of the client-based project?</td>
<td>90% of respondents are at least satisfied with the final deliverable of the client-based project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied were you with the overall experience of the client-based project?</td>
<td>93.33% of the respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied with their overall experience of the client-based project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: Question six results

Figure 5: Question twelve results
Figure 6: Question eleven results

Q11. How likely would your organization participate in another HSU client-based project?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Number of Respondents

Figure 7: Question ten results

Q10. How likely would you recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone?

- Definitely
- Probably
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Number of Respondents
Figure 8: Question thirteen results

The impact of the client-based courses, grants an understanding of how the final deliverable influenced the participating organization. However, solely basing the success of the client-based courses on the impact created by the deliverable does not serve it justice. A client-based course is a process. It entails learning, planning, meeting, communicating, and delivering. The client-based courses at Humboldt State University are a semester long. When effectiveness and satisfaction are measured, typically there are a mixed set of results. The term “perfection” does not define the client-based courses at Humboldt State University. There are always things to improve upon. So, qualitative questions were designed to identify improvements and recommendations. Improvements and recommendations can generate higher satisfaction and effectiveness rates for future client-based courses. To determine the overall effectiveness of the client-based course
process, both quantitative and qualitative questions were created. The questions asked unveil how satisfied clients were with their overall experience. The quantitative questions provide a broad spectrum of client satisfaction in various areas of the process. Client satisfaction turns out to be very high. When asked about the process of working with students, 90.32% of the respondents felt the process was enjoyable and very enjoyable. Respondents were then asked if they were satisfied with the students’ abilities to meet their organization’s needs. Similar to the previous answer, 93.34% were at least satisfied with their ability to meet their organization’s needs. These high satisfaction rates show that clients were pleased to work with Humboldt State students in client-based courses. Clients were also satisfied with the students ability meet expectations and fulfill the needs of their organization.

The probability of clients participating in client-based courses again and recommending participation to others is significantly high. 32.26% of respondents would probably participate in another HSU client-based project. While, 67.74% of the respondents would definitely participate in another HSU client-based project. 16.67% of the respondents would probably recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone. Also, 80% of the respondents definitely would recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone. This data implies that the clients’ participation in the Humboldt State University courses are effective.

The satisfaction of respondents continued to show when they were asked if they were satisfied with the final deliverable and overall experience of the client-based courses. 90% of respondents were, at least, satisfied with the final deliverable of the client-based
project. 93.33% of the respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied with their overall experience of the client-based project. These two questions results strengthen the fact that the majority of clients who have participated in the client-based courses at Humboldt State are, at the very least, satisfied.

Similar to the quantitative data found in the general impact section, the process satisfaction quantitative data sets the stage for the qualitative results. The results above show that the majority of respondents feel the client-based courses are effective. But, the quantitative questions prevent the clients to provide depth and reasoning. How are the courses effective? What did the clients like? What would they recommend to improve the client-based courses?

Table 9: Qualitative themes regarding process satisfaction/improvement recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Questions Used</th>
<th>Themes Found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Process Satisfaction/Improvements and Recommendations | Q7. Please let us know what were the challenges, if any, working with the students.  
Q8. Please share what you liked about working with the students?  
Q9. What advice could you provide for improving future client-based projects?  
Q15. Please share any other thoughts, feelings, or experiences about the client-based project. | 1. Communication and scheduling were challenges faced and recommendations for improvement.  
2. Student experience and accountability were challenges experienced.  
3. Clients appreciated the professionalism and energy students brought.  
4. Participation in the client-based courses was a great experience. |
After analyzing the open-ended questions, four themes were found. As mentioned before, the themes found are very broad, due to the different client-based course subjects. When asked, about challenges faced while working with the students, two common themes emerged from the responses. Despite the challenges, there were 12 out of the 27 respondents, who answered question seven, who stated there were no challenges. The first theme, was that communication and scheduling were challenges faced. Many respondents mentioned communication and scheduling issues. In some cases they mentioned both. For example, one respondent answered by stating, “Scheduling, as is with the case in any large group project, can be a challenge. It was also sometimes unclear as to the different roles that each student played.” (Question 7, Respondent 27) The scheduling and communication issues are created by a variety of variables that weren’t measured in this research. The students’ lack of experience and accountability may be directly correlated to the communication and scheduling challenges. However, that correlation is not accurately depicted by the data collected. The second theme, describes student experience and accountability as challenges experienced. Respondents found that students lacked experience and accountability. One respondent explains that, “Students require teaching, and projects require management. Student projects therefore require both, and it meant every Friday I had three hours of meetings, and numerous emails. It was work, but worth it.” (Question 7, Respondent 3). When asked, for recommendations to improve future client-based courses, the majority of respondents stated communication and planning improvements. Clients wanted better communication
between them and the students. Some recommendations, regarding communication, were to initiate more meetings and provide clear expectations. Respondents also recommended to plan further in advance and create milestones to keep students on track. These types of recommendations can really improve the client-based course design. Professors can make mandatory client meetings, provide clear expectations to all clients, and implement milestones throughout the semester.

The third theme discovered, acknowledges what the clients liked about working with the students. The major differences in courses and projects reflected the mix of responses. However, many clients appreciated the professionalism and energy students brought. Eighteen respondents mentioned something about the professionalism and energy students brought to the project. When asked about what they liked about working with students, one respondent stated, “Their enthusiasm and commitment to the project! It felt like they sincerely approached the project as a business and not just something they needed to do to get through class.” (Question 8, Respondent 6). Students were excited for the opportunity to gain real-world experience. Another respondent mentioned, “They were committed and enthusiastic about the project and presentation.” (Question 8, Respondent 22). Clients were gratefully satisfied with the amount of professionalism and energy students delivered throughout the process.

Based on all the satisfaction data collected, there is no question the majority of respondents felt it was a great experience. When asked to share other thoughts, feelings, or experiences many respondents provided positive feedback. They described how the client-based course in which they participated in was a great experience. One respondent
stated, “Excellent value to the local community and a great way to bridge the gap between the university and community.” (Question 15, Respondent 8). In the end, experiences will differ because of the various variables that create the client-based courses.
CONCLUSION

Previous research has shown that students benefit from client-based courses. However, there has been no research demonstrating the benefits participating clients receive. Students gain real-world knowledge and experience, which may not be obtained in a traditional university course (Kreth, 2005). Service-learning courses have been found to heighten student consciousness of ability, self-confidence in selected careers, the urge to study the subject, and the performance on course tasks (Rose, Rose and Norman, 2005). There are many benefits that students receive from effective client-based courses. Despite the number of benefits, there is some literature that highlights negatives associated with service learning/client-based courses. Just like any course, the course structure, professor, and the students dictate the success of the client-based courses. When misalignment between a student's learning desires and imposed learning activities create negative effects, this may distract an individual from their learning objectives (Yorio and Ye, 2010). Client-based courses generate benefits depending on the amount of quality inputs by the universities, professors, and students. The lacking amount of research on client benefits, inspired research on the subject.

There were three objectives created to help mold the research. To determine the impact of client-based projects at HSU. To determine the effectiveness of client-based projects at HSU. Also, to determine how to improve client-based projects at HSU for future projects. These objectives were met by creating a survey that was administered to clients who have participated in six different client-based courses at Humboldt State University. Clients
answered questions that were both quantitative and qualitative. Based upon the results, the data was grouped into two topic areas. General impact and Process satisfaction/Improvements and recommendations are the two topic areas used to help shed light upon the determined objectives. Within the general impact section, both quantitative and qualitative questions were used to determine the general impact client-based courses create for participating clients. The quantitative data demonstrated a positive impact on the majority of participating clients. One of the biggest findings was the amount of new information, insights, or strategies clients gained. 83.87% of the respondents gained new information, insights, or strategies provided by students. Another large finding was the amount of implementation or usage of suggestions, products or tools. 92.34% of respondents had at least a small amount of the suggestions, products or tools provided by students implemented or used. The qualitative questions provided a more in-depth look of what kind of information, insights or strategies were provided and how they were implemented. Due to the different courses used in the study, there was a wide variety of information given by clients. To supplement the differences, at least three themes were found for each topic area. The three themes found are as follows: Recommendations and products were implemented and beneficial. Clients and their organizations gained new insights and validated previous thoughts. The suggestions, products or tools aligned with clients’ organizations mission and strategy. The themes found expose the positive impacts that client-based courses at Humboldt State provide.
Similar to the general impact section, process satisfaction/improvements and recommendations used both quantitative and qualitative questions. The quantitative questions provided high numbers of satisfaction. The majority of clients were satisfied with the client-based courses they participated in. 90.32% of the respondents found the process enjoyable and very enjoyable. 93.34% of respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied with the students abilities to meet their organization’s needs. The majority of respondents would, at least, probably participate again and recommend participation in client-based courses. 93.33% of the respondents were satisfied and extremely satisfied with their overall experience of the client-based project. To discover exactly why clients were so satisfied with the client-based courses, they were asked qualitative questions to dig deeper. The qualitative questions were asking what they liked about the courses and working with students, the challenges they faced, and recommendations would you give for future client-based courses? The four common themes found that outline the qualitative section, of the topic process satisfaction/improvements and recommendations, are as follows: Communication and scheduling were challenges faced and recommendations for improvement. Student experience and accountability were challenges experienced. Clients appreciated the professionalism and energy students brought. Participation in the client-based courses was a great experience. The recommendations provided are ideas that would help resolve challenges the clients faced. Overall, the clients were satisfied with the overall process of the client-based courses.
The research conducted was empirical, because of the lack of research in the benefits clients receive from client-based courses. This research can be used as a building block for further research on the subject. The benefits found were very broad and generic. This research demonstrated the general impact and satisfaction clients encountered. The research also touched upon methods to improve the client-based courses at Humboldt State University. The impact clients received, can be researched even further by exploring different measurements of impact. For example, how the client-based courses have impacted organizations monetarily. Also, this study only takes Humboldt State University courses into account. Only including Humboldt State University courses does not encompass all university client-based courses. Similar studies can be conducted at different universities, and the data may vary. To conclude, this research has proven that the Humboldt State University client-based courses positively impact organizations, the clients are generally satisfied with all aspects of the courses, and clients have provided some recommendations to improve the future client-based courses.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

HSU Client-Based/Service Learning Courses Survey
Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Future clients and students will benefit from this client-based course research. This survey is being administered under the guidance of Professor Nancy Vizenor and Josh Ertmer, MBA Student, of Humboldt State University School of Business. Your identity will not be revealed and your participation is completely voluntary. Please feel free to skip any questions.

The survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete. You must be 18 years of age to complete the survey. If you have questions please contact Dr. Nancy Vizenor by phone: 707-826-6021 or email: ncv2@humboldt.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration; it is greatly appreciated.

1) Thinking back to the client-based/service-learning course with which you were partnered, how much of the information, insights, or strategies provided by students to the clients was new? Please circle one or check the appropriate response.

1  2  3  4
No new information, Very little new information, Some new information, Lots of new information, insights or strategies insights or strategies insights or strategies insights or strategies

☐ I don’t know  ☐ Does not apply because the students created something for my business or organization.

2) Overall, how much of an impact did the client-based project make on your organization? Please circle one or check I don’t know.

1  2  3  4
No impact at all Not much of an impact A moderate impact A large impact

☐ I don’t know

3) After the completion of the client-based project, did you or someone else in your organization implement or use the suggestions, products or tools the students provided? Please check one.

1  2  3  4
Not at all A small amount A moderate amount A large amount

☐ I don’t know

Go to the next page.
4) Please think back, and describe how the suggestions, products or tools were used?

5) It would help us if you would describe how your company or organization benefited, if at all, from the client-based project.

6) How was the process of working with the students? Please circle one or check I don’t know.

   1  2  3  4
Not enjoyable at all  Somewhat enjoyable  Enjoyable  Very enjoyable  I don’t know

Go to the next page.
7) Please let us know what were the challenges, if any, working with the students.

8) Please share what you liked about working with the students?
9) What advice could you provide for improving future client-based projects?

10) How likely would you recommend participation in a HSU client-based project to someone? Please circle one.

   1  2  3  4
   Definitely not  Probably not  Probably  Definitely

11) How likely would your organization participate in another HSU client-based project? Please circle one.

   1  2  3  4
   Definitely not  Probably not  Probably  Definitely

12) How satisfied were you with the overall experience of the client-based project? Please circle one.

   1  2  3  4
   Extremely dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Satisfied  Extremely Satisfied

13) How satisfied were you with the final deliverable of the client-based project? Please circle one.

   1  2  3  4
   Extremely dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Satisfied  Extremely Satisfied

14) How satisfied were you with the students’ abilities to meet your organization’s needs? Please circle one.

   1  2  3  4
   Extremely dissatisfied  Dissatisfied  Satisfied  Extremely Satisfied
15) Please share any other thoughts, feelings, or experiences about the client-based project.

16) Please share what you liked about working with the students?
17) About what year did you or your organization work with the students from HSU? Please check one.

☐ 2005
☐ 2006
☐ 2007
☐ 2008
☐ 2009
☐ 2010
☐ 2011
☐ 2012
☐ 2013
☐ I don’t know

18) With whom did you work?

☐ Lonny Grafman
☐ Courtney Hunt-Munther
☐ Dr. David Sleeth-Keppler
☐ Dr. Tasha Souza
☐ Dr. Nancy Vizenor
☐ I don’t know

19) With what course did you work?

☐ BA 417 - Small Business Consulting
☐ BA 446 - Marketing Research
☐ Comm 480 – Communication Training & Consulting
☐ ENGR 217 - Introduction to Design Products
☐ ENGR 305 - Technology and the Environment
☐ JMC 429 - Advanced Public Relations
☐ Not sure

Thank you for taking time to complete the survey. Your time is greatly appreciated. Your answers assist us with our research and with future client-based courses at HSU.