

ASSOCIATED COLLEGES OF THE SOUTH
TECHNOLOGY FELLOWS PROGRAM APPLICATION

Mary Grace Neville, Southwestern University
Business as an Agent of World Benefit: On-Line Conference Curriculum Unit

I am applying for a Mellon Teaching with Technology Fellowship for the summer of 2004 to develop a curriculum unit for teaching business by leveraging a new on-line conference series about the positive intersection of business and society. The On-Line Conferences are being designed as part of Business as an Agent of World Benefit (BAWB)¹, a world inquiry and global dialogue project initiated at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Through this grant, I would formalize, pilot, and codify a teaching module for liberal arts faculty interested in introducing business students to social, ethical, environmental and public policy issues in today's increasingly global, interconnected world.

Background: Rationale for Overall Project

BAWB was conceived following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks affecting people from over 80 countries. The tragedy generated urgency for studying positive change and hopeful potential in the world. Because business is a major organizing force in global society, project organizers – me included – chose to begin by looking at the positive intersection of business and society^{2,3}. Recently, I began collaborating with BAWB project staff to imagine an on-line conference concept as a method for stimulating innovative learning in the business and social sectors⁴, in professionals and students alike.

Description: Part of the Project to be Done under ACS Funding

Semi-annual, 72 hour, *on-line conferences*, encourage “rolling” participation across time zones worldwide. Dialogue occurs in two ways: first, prerecorded conference presentations are available for 6-12, linked with related, asynchronous dialogue; second, presenters are scheduled for live interactive times for both synchronous and asynchronous follow-up.

Specifically, I propose to create the following pedagogical material to support business faculty across Associated Colleges of the South in bringing their students (virtually) to these conferences and in integrating the experience into their course designs:

¹ See www.worldinquiry.org.

² Neville, M.G. & Cooperrider, D.L. (2002, April). Preliminary Report: Business as an Agent of World Benefit. Paper presented at the international conference Spirit in Business: Mindfulness, Ethics and the Bottom Line. (<http://www.weatherhead.cwru.edu/bawb/>).

³ Neville, MG (2003) “Generating Holistic Wealth: A Framework for Leading Positive Change at the Intersection of Business and Society.” Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University.

⁴ See Neville, MG and Zxhemebayeva, N. (working paper). “Global Dialogue in a Virtual World: A Case Study of the Ai Positive Learning Network.”

1. Brief pre-conference materials about appreciative inquiry⁵,
2. BAWB project materials, background, and objectives,
3. Recommended pre-reading materials for business students, with suggestions for adaptations to other disciplines (such as public policy, environmental studies, sociology and ethics),
4. Coaching materials (for student and teacher) for how students can effectively join into the conference discussions, and
5. Student project assignment(s) for application of ideas originating in the conference sessions⁶.

Timeline: Deliverables/Milestones for ACS Funded Part of the Project

Deliverables for ACS funding begin in the spring, 2004 when I will *survey* students who participated in the January conference about their experiences using the conference forum (see footnote 6). In May and June 2004, I will *design the curriculum unit* such that faculty unfamiliar with the BAWB project or the Appreciative Inquiry methodology or philosophy can systematically integrate such a unit into their teaching. Material will be codified by July 30, 2004 so that ACS faculty may review it during summer months for inclusion in fall teaching. I welcome and encourage ACS colleague *assessment* feedback.

Technology: Technical Requirements for the Project

The only technology requirement for participating in a BAWB On-Line Conference is *high-speed Internet access*. While capability exists for print, audio and video segment download and upload, requirements are low in order to encourage participation from people in countries with unstable and/or developing infrastructure.

Students and instructors using this teaching unit participate in the conferences both collaboratively with classmates and independently. During class, participation is face-to-face with members of their class (by convening in a computer lab), and virtual with conference presenters and participants on-line. Outside of class time, students engage independently. The conference is followed by 30 days of follow-up access to threaded conversations, postings, and self-organized interest groups⁷.

Other Support: Institutional and/or Outside Support for Project

The conference infrastructure exists through BAWB for public and subscriber use. Colleagues from four universities⁸ (already involved in BAWB) continue to be consulted

⁵ Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) is a philosophy and a research methodology rooted in positive psychology. It is oriented towards facilitation of social and organizational change. For more information about Ai, see: Cooperrider, D.L. and Whitney, D. (1999). Appreciative Inquiry. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Communications. For more information about Ai as an action research methodology, see: Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (eds), (2000). Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice. London: Sage Publications.

⁶ I plan to pilot class projects with upper level Southwestern students enrolling in my "Business Ethics and Social Responsibility" course during the spring term, 2004.

⁷ While formal materials can be archived beyond 30 days, idea development and conversation continues through self-organized links among participants.

⁸ Case Western Reserve University, Benedictine University, Lawrence Technological University, and the Navel Post-Graduate Institute.

about curriculum design. Because of the education mission, conference coordinators are committed to including students – our leaders of tomorrow.

Learning Outcomes: How the Project Will Enhance Teaching/Learning

The objective of integrating students into such an on-line conference is to:

1. Foster innovative learning and social responsibility in young minds.
2. Encourage multi-disciplinary, applied thinking, particularly at the intersection of business and society.
3. Teach the art of inquiry as an approach to life-long learning.
4. Create social support systems and reference groups (networks) for students and faculty interested in positive change topics (theorized to be instrumental in creating future positive change leaders).

Curriculum: How the Project Will be Integrated into the Curriculum

Traditional college students benefit from incorporating BAWB into their curriculum by:

1. *Expanding their perspectives* (through experiential participation and inquiry) in a short period of time and at minimal expense (the cost of on-line computer access),
2. *Meeting people* (virtually) from many different countries who believe positive change can happen,
3. *Building their critical thinking and self confidence* skills by asking provocative questions in a curious, adult, multi-national, and philosophically mixed group of conference audience, and
4. Setting the foundation for students to *select/design research topics* on the leading edge of innovation and social change.

Assessment: How the Project Will be Evaluated

In addition to regular course evaluations, I will solicit specific student evaluation of the module (including clarity of instruction, clarity of assignments, relevance of the global interactive context, and ease of integrating themselves into discussion with other conference participants) via a form to be turned in anonymously. I will also solicit feedback from faculty choosing to use the course module in their classes; faculty will also be asked about ease of integrating this module into their larger curriculum and perceived success of doing so.

Dissemination: How the Project Will be Shared with ACS Colleagues

The completed curriculum unit will be posted on the web and feature links to other sources studying the positive intersection of business and societies. ACS business faculty will be specifically invited to participate in the conference series. They will then be polled for their ideas and interests in applying the world inquiry to their classes.