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EVST 537.01: Building Effective Environmental Organizations

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EVST 537: Building Effective Environmental Organizations

Class Times/Location: Monday and Wednesday 4:30-6 P.M. in Rankin 202

Instructor: Tom Roy

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COURSE PURPOSE:

American society is built upon institutional approaches to providing goods and services. The private sector (market) produces and distributes goods and services for profit, and the public sector (government) provides goods and services that either can not be produced profitably by the private sector, or that address fundamental common needs that our society agrees should not be left to the private sector.

These two institutional approaches each have limitations. Because its primary goal is to make a profit for the producer, the market sometimes works against the common good. An example is the failure of selected industries to account for environmental externalities in their costs of doing business. Government, as each of you has experienced in some way, too often becomes captive to special interests or is non-responsive to the public whom it is supposed to serve. Historically Americans have turned to the "third sector" (nonprofit organizations) to represent their interests and mediate on their behalves. Nonprofit organizations have been the wellspring of the most significant conservation and environmental work in this country and continue to be the lifeblood for the most creative and dynamic work in those arenas. The goal of this course is for you to understand the purposes and roles of the third sector and, more importantly, to develop the skills necessary to work effectively within such organizations.

On a more personal note, most of you will probably work for a nonprofit at some time in your career, and certainly you have been and will continue to be involved as a volunteer in those organizations whose goals mirror your passions. It behooves you, therefore, to know how to make nonprofits as effective as possible so that you can feel that your participation is making the difference you wish to make with your life. More pragmatically, a March 2006 study from the Bridgestone Group predicts that within the next decade nonprofits with revenues over \$250,000 annually will need perhaps as many as one million new employee-directors/managers. An implicit purpose for this course is to enhance your prospects for employment in the nonprofit sector.

COURSE FORMAT:

How to teach this course is always a conundrum for me since each of you brings your own nonprofit background and interests. What I have tried to do is organize the course to hit hardest those aspects of nonprofit work that have been the most troublesome to our graduates over the years and to teach you concepts and skills that can make you both more effective and happier in your nonprofit work than perhaps you have been. That necessarily means that we spend more time on mission, budgets and fund raising than say issue selection and campaign organization. Because of your commitments and previous experiences and EVST coursework you are pretty attuned to how to frame an issue and mobilize the public. But developing a budget, finding funding and sustaining an organization are elements of nonprofit work you are probably less familiar with and that will challenge your abilities and patience. My goal is for you to walk out of this course confident that you can do those things successfully.

I have been involved in work with nonprofits as an executive, board member, board president, founder and volunteer for over 40 years. Over those years, the amount of information on how to work more effectively within nonprofits and access to it has proliferated exponentially. And yet my own experiences and the observations of the most recognized nonprofit management experts all point to the same bottom line...people. All the theory, all the training, all the skills, all the latest information make not a twit of difference if you can't work effectively with people. Frankly, I don't know how to teach folks how to work effectively with others. Certainly learning skills for running meetings, approaching folks for gifts, constructing mission statements etc. may enhance one's effectiveness and thus ability with people but,

more than anything else, getting on with others is a matter of experience and reflecting about relationships. The course is structured to teach the theory and skills for effective leadership, but together with you I want to instill into our shared time opportunities to discuss and reflect upon how to most effectively engage and work with others.

OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT:

- I. Getting Started: Read, Kit, Part I; Klein, Part I.
- II. Managing a Nonprofit Organization: Read, Kit, Part II; Klein, Parts 5, 6, 7.
- III. Successful Fundraising: Read, Kit, Part III, chapters 13-16, 18. Klien, Parts 2, 3, 4 & 8.
- IV. Writing a Grant Proposal: Read, Kit, chapter 17.
- V. Leadership: Read: *A Team of Rivals*, entire book

TEXTS:

Gecan, Michael. *Going Public*. Boston: First Anchor, 2004.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. *A Team of Rivals*.

Hutton, Stan and Phillips, Frances. *Nonprofit Kit for Dummies*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley Press, 2006.

Klein, Kim. *Fundraising for Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Seltzer, Michael. *Securing your Organization's Future*. New York: The Foundation Center, 2001.

TO COMPLETE THE COURSE SUCCESSFULLY YOU MUST:

- 1.) Come to class.
- 2.) Do the readings and be prepared to participate in class discussions, ask relevant questions etc.
- 3.) Do all in class or take home exercises.
- 4.) Individually or in a group of no more than 3, develop a mission statement and a program plan for a new organization or prepare a revised mission statement and program plan for an existing organization. Due 15, October.
- 5.) Prepare a fund raising plan for your proposed organization or a revised program of an existing organization. Provide detail for one element of your fund raising plan i.e., write a grant proposal; prepare all the elements of a direct mail campaign etc. Due Nov. 19th.
- 6.) Based upon your reading of *A Team of Rivals*, define elements of effective leadership and assess your leadership abilities against these criteria. This 5-7 page essay can be done at home and is due on the exam date scheduled for this class.

FINAL NOTE

Learning should be challenging and fun. I need your help in determining pace, what you wish to emphasize more than something else etc. Don't be shy about asking questions, offering advice or even criticism. We are in this together to learn.